



**Proponent Testimony on HB 2189
House Child Welfare and Foster Care Committee
February 19, 2024**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 19 private, non-profit child welfare agencies that collectively provide a full array of services for children and families in child abuse and neglect prevention, human trafficking prevention, family preservation, foster care, adoption, independent living, and parent, youth, and child skill-building, mental health, and substance use treatment. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2189.

Protections for Youth 18 And Older in Foster Care – In HB2189

Young adults aging out of the foster care system face several hardships and many can benefit from remaining in care after the age of 18. Under the current law, the court may end jurisdiction when a youth reaches 18 years of age or after June 1 of the school year in which the youth turned 18 provided that the youth is still attending high school. This can be done regardless of the youth's desires to avail themselves of the supports continued care may offer.

HB 2189 provides a mechanism to make the young adult's wish to remain in care and participate in services binding upon the court. The client is required to participate in case planning, independent living services, and make efforts in the process of transitioning to adulthood. Provided they are making those efforts, they can remain in care until they are 21. Should they cease participating, the court may end jurisdiction. If the client is absent from their approved placement for longer than 30 days, jurisdiction will cease. This provides a safeguard to protect abuse of services by clients who are not participating and ensure that service delivery resources are benefiting those truly engaged.

HB 2189 will provide at risk young adults with supports to aid their transition to adulthood, giving them time to mature and develop important life skills.

Enhanced Supports for Youth After Leaving Foster Care – Proposed Amendment

As we understand it, the original concept behind HB2189 was to allow a youth who had chosen to leave foster care the option to re-enter foster care after age 18. After discussing the most effective way to achieve this intended aspect of HB2189 with members and with DCF, we support an amendment to HB2189 that would authorize DCF to offer enhanced supports to youth who seek them after leaving foster care, but that would not require the youth to access these supports via our court system. We believe the court as an entry point would be a barrier to youth use of available services.

We ask that you support HB 2189. If an amendment is brought to achieve enhanced support by DCF after a child leaves care, we would support. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Kansas City
DCCCA, Lawrence
Eckerd Connects, Wichita
EmberHope Youthville, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
FosterAdopt Connect, Olathe
Gathered, Derby
ICTSOS, Wichita
KidsTLC, Olathe

KVC Kansas, Olathe
O'Connell Children's Shelter, Lawrence
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Restoration Family Services, Wichita
Saint Francis Ministries, Salina
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Wichita Children's Home, Wichita
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