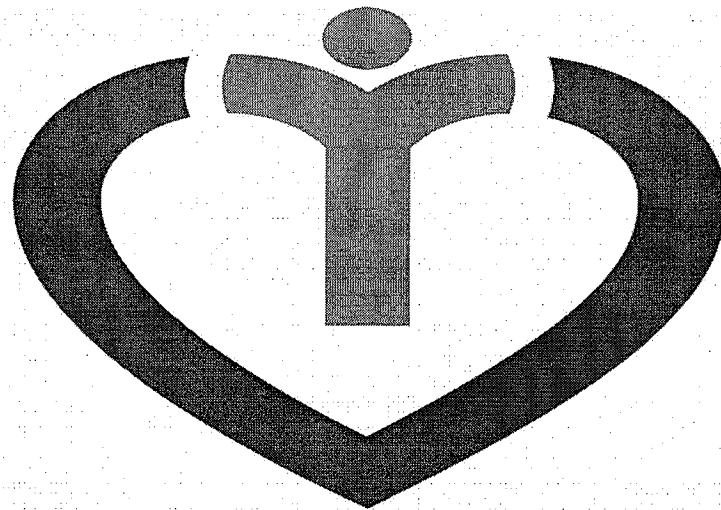


United Methodist Youthville Child Welfare Services

Testimony Supporting HB 2779



Youthville

Giving Children Back Their Childhood

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House Corrections & Juvenile Justice
Committee
2012 Session
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Attachment # 16-1

Chair Colloton and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of HB 2779. United Methodist Youthville currently operates the only Secure Care Facility in Kansas. Our facility is located in Newton and contains 12 beds for females. To be admitted to our facility a child has been found to be a child in need of care and a judge must provide a valid court order authorizing placement due to the youth's history of running from other placements and the youth's inability to be housed safely in another setting.

About 40 percent of the girls in our Secure Care Facility are victims of human trafficking. We currently have a small waiting list to be admitted to the facility. Currently youth usually stay around 120 days with the longest stays lasting around 180 days. While in Secure Care the girls are provided schooling in the facility by the local school district and only leave the facility when accompanied by at least two staff to receive medical treatment. We work very intensely with the girls while they are in the facility to ensure they receive any substance abuse or mental health treatment that they need. We also provide a best practice cognitive behavioral therapy program called, "Thinking for a Change." This program helps girls examine their thinking patterns and breaks the cycle of thinking that they had while they were engaged in the human trafficking.

We see the need for Secure Care services as critical to help these girls break the cycle that they have been engaged in, provide them treatment to help them heal, and then change their thinking so they can become productive members of society. The need for treatment is great and we believe additional Secure Care beds would be utilized if they were available. This bill creates a funding mechanism by creating the Human Trafficking Fund that would allow funding to be utilized to create more beds to ensure youth involved in this behavior are able to be held securely while receiving help. To open another 12 beds Youthville would need \$50,000 in upfront funding to retrofit another housing unit to make it secure to house these girls. Currently, the

Secure Care rate paid for by the SRS Child Welfare Contractors is \$168 a day with an additional grant from the state that brings the per day rate up to \$220 per day. The fund created by this bill, along with the financial penalties created by the people who traffic these girls would be invested well into additional treatment for the victims.

United Methodist Youthville strongly supports the passage of this bill. We do suggest some language clean-up that would ensure that the state does not jeopardize federal IV-E dollars related to the direct placement of youth in the custody of the Secretary of SRS, clarifying that Youth Residential Facilities are not secure settings appropriate for runners, and some friendly technical clean-up language that may be needed. We stand ready to work with the authors of this bill to ensure this measure is passed to better protect and serve the victims of human trafficking in Kansas.