



TESTIMONY OF JOEY HENTZLER
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

-
KANSAS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND SENIORS
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2403
MARCH 22, 2019

My name is Joey Hentzler; I am the director of advocacy for the Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed Supports House Bill 2403.

The Kansas foster care system is in crisis.¹ Fixing the crisis will take a coordinated effort that addresses the issues on several fronts, including increased resources and support for Kansas families, improving conditions and training for those working in the system, and implementing structural improvements. Importantly, a joint legislative committee will be able to offer additional oversight and will have the power to introduce legislation.

It is also important to note that recommendations alone are not enough to effect change. The Child Welfare System Task Force established by House Sub. for SB 126 in 2017 formed working groups and developed extensive recommendations over a period of 18 months. The working group recommendations and the final taskforce recommendations to the 2019 Kansas Legislature have so far been largely ignored, despite the immense amount of time, energy, research, and effort that went into developing, crafting, honing, and sorting these recommendations.

A joint committee that can sustain these types of recommendations, provide ongoing oversight, and offer legislation to make the urgently needed changes in the foster care system is welcome.

¹ Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope. "Addressing the Foster Care Crisis in Kansas: Recommendations from the Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope Coalition." Retrieved at: http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh_2018report_final.pdf