

2/20/20

Topeka Capitol  
House of Representatives  
Topeka, KS

To Committee Chair, Rep. Susan Concannon and House Committee on Children and Seniors;

As a previous foster child, a master social worker, prior child welfare SW during transition phase(s), a foster and adoptive parent, and an advocate for youth-from-hard places, I am a proponent of the HB 2187 regarding an Office of a Child Advocate.

With awareness of the numerical growth of youth within foster care, I think it is essential for us to also take into account extended factors that play a role in that. And as diligently as the State of Kansas is working to address the needs of the family and prevention, a specified advocate for the voice of the child is a key player.

- This role can provide (for the term of 6 years) a CONSISTENT provider in the life of at-risk youth and provide a consistent office during times of administration changes.
- This role can provide another opportunity for a youth to obtain a relationship.
- A relationship from these aspects can provide a voice for the often over-looked or (due to reasons from the child or not) diminished perspective of the youth.
- There are many great contracting services on behalf of youth. This would be a way to coordinate those services with competence in the overall system collaboration.
- Many youth just want their *voice to be heard and valued*. This would provide a clear and consistent opportunity for that to occur.
- Having a provider that can help advocate for the needs of a child is an indirect support for the whole family system.
- This role is to be created as an avenue that lifts some weight off of direct-service, crisis staff so they can provide more well-rounded support to those they serve.

As a standing, grateful, rural community supporter of the child welfare system and the genuine hearts and efforts of the professionals that work in it day-in and day-out, I am a proponent for this bill as a asset for the organizations, children and families relating to child welfare.

With gratitude for all who work within and for Kansas Child Welfare,

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