

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 384**  
FEBRUARY 18, 2020

Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

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 SB 384.**

By requiring an annual report on important educational information concerning students in foster care, SB 384 will help shine a light on the best path forward for reform.

The foster care system in Kansas is in crisis.<sup>1</sup> Too many Kansas children are in the foster care system and they are entering at racially disproportionate rates. Kansas children are staying in foster care for too long and they often experience dangerously high instability in their placements. It is too difficult for Kansas children in foster care to find permanency. Less than 18% of children attend the same school as they did prior to their entry into the foster care system.<sup>2</sup> The graduation rate for foster care kids who aged out of the system in State Fiscal Year 2019 was only 38.6%.<sup>3</sup> In State Fiscal Year 2020, through December 2019, that rate was only 44.4%.<sup>4</sup>

In order to come up with the best solutions for addressing this crisis, we need to have a more complete understanding of the challenges we are facing. Information regarding the details of a foster care child's experience in the education system is essential to tailoring the best response. The data that we do have makes it clear that kids are being failed by the system. Ending that failure will require a complete picture, and SB 384 helps fill in the pieces.

Racial disparities among kids in the foster care system are continuing to rise. In State Fiscal Year 2019, black children in Kansas were 2.24 times more likely than white children to be in foster care.<sup>5</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope. "Addressing the Foster Care Crisis in Kansas - Update: December 2019."

[http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh\\_2019\\_update\\_report.pdf](http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh_2019_update_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Attending Same School Success Indicator FY 2020."

[http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2020DataReports/FCAD\\_ContactOutcomes/Same%20School\\_Success%20Indicator\\_FY2020.pdf](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2020DataReports/FCAD_ContactOutcomes/Same%20School_Success%20Indicator_FY2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Adults Ending Custody with the Secretary will have Completed Grade 12 SFY2019."

[http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2019DataReports/FCAD\\_ContactOutcomes/Completed\\_grd12FY2019.pdf](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2019DataReports/FCAD_ContactOutcomes/Completed_grd12FY2019.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Adults Ending Custody with the Secretary will have Completed Grade 12 SFY2020."

[http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2020DataReports/FCAD\\_ContactOutcomes/Completed\\_grd12FY2020.pdf](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2020DataReports/FCAD_ContactOutcomes/Completed_grd12FY2020.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope. "Addressing the Foster Care Crisis in Kansas - Update: December 2019."

[http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh\\_2019\\_update\\_report.pdf](http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh_2019_update_report.pdf)

disparity in Kansas has risen every year since 2015.<sup>6</sup> Given the known racial disparities among all kids in foster care, Kansas Appleseed believes gathering disaggregated subgroup data for racial and ethnic groups of foster kids in the education system would also be important. It is our understanding that this bill is modeled off HB 1314 in Indiana that was passed in 2018, and the annual report required by that legislation contains this valuable racial and ethnic group data.<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons, Kansas Appleseed urges favorable passage of SB 384 while recommending it be amended to also include collection of deidentified disaggregated racial and ethnic data for the seven data points currently outlined in the bill.

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<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Indiana State Board of Education. "House Enrolled Act 1314-2018: Annual Report on Foster Care Youth Educational Outcomes." 2019. <https://www.in.gov/sboe/files/HEA1314-Foster%20Care%20Youth%20Annual%20Report%20April%202019.v3.pdf>