

TESTIMONY OF MIKE FONKERT
JUST CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND SENIORS
IN SUPPORT OF SB 12
MARCH 8, 2022

Members of the House Committee on Children and Seniors:

My name is Mike Fonkert; I am a Campaign Director for 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 12. Creating performance-based contracts for evidence-based prevention and early intervention is an important step in ensuring a foster care system that is effective and accountable.

The foster care system in Kansas is in crisis.¹ 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. So far in state fiscal year 2022, black children in Kansas were 2.1 times more likely than white children to be in foster care.² The average length of stay in foster care is up over 23 months - the highest it's been since at least 2010.³ Kids in foster care are experiencing an average of 6.3 moves while they are in the system.⁴ Less than 18% of children attend the same school as they did prior to their entry into the foster care system.⁵ More than 8% of kids leaving the system are re-entering within 12 months.⁶

Addressing these issues must include a clear plan of action on the front end. Early intervention has a profound effect on outcomes for kids in foster care.⁷ Evidence-based prevention and training is effective at reducing placement instability and reducing the risk of a breakdown in a child's continuum of care.⁸

¹ 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

² Analysis by Kansas Appleseed population estimates from Census Bureau and demographic data from DCF
http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2022DataReports/FCAD_Summary/RacebyCounty_FY22.pdf

³ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Length of Stay and Reason for Ending Out of Home Placement-SFY22."
http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2022DataReports/FCAD_Summary/LengthofstayFY2022.pdf

⁴ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Placement Stability: Rate per 1,000 days in Foster Care SFY2022."
http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2022DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/PlacementStabilityRateFY22.pdf

⁵ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Attending Same School Success Indicator FY 2022."
http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2022DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/Same%20School_Success%20Indicator_FY2022.pdf

⁶ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Re-entry to Foster Care in 12 months FY2022."
http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2021DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/ReenteredFC_12months_FY2022.pdf

⁷ Wade, M. "Effect of Foster Care Intervention on Trajectories of General and Specific Psychopathology Among Children With Histories of Institutional Rearing." *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2018.

⁸ Konijn, C. "Prevention of Instability in Foster Care: A Case File Review Study." *Child Youth Care Forum*. 2020.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10566-020-09584-z>

Focusing on prevention and early intervention will undoubtedly also be cost effective. Studies find that prevention and early interventions that address the symptoms of the child and also provide parenting education and support are the most effective at reducing system costs.⁹

Requiring a clear implementation plan for performance-based contracts focusing on prevention and early intervention is an important step in addressing the ongoing foster care crisis.

For all of these reason, Kansas Appleseed urges the passage of SB12.

⁹ Doyle, J. "Economics of Child Protection: Maltreatment, Foster Care, and Intimate Partner Violence." Annual Review of Economics. 2018. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-economics-080217-053237>