



**Proponent Testimony on HB2469
House Committee on Children and Seniors
March 16, 2022**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Esau, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 21 private, non-profit child welfare agencies that collectively provide a full array of services for children and families in child abuse and neglect prevention, family preservation, foster care, adoption, independent living, and parent, youth, and child skill-building, mental health, and substance use treatment. The majority of our members serve in recruiting, training, licensing, sponsoring, and supporting foster and kinship parents. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on HB 2469.

We appreciate the goals and purposes of HB 2469 and support the need for a clear statement of foster parent rights. Foster parents are important partners in the Kansas child welfare system that directly care for the emotional, physical, and nurturing needs of youth. We support legislation that strengthens our state efforts to support foster parents, as it can enhance foster parent recruitment and retention, which has a positive impact on youth in care.

There are four suggestions we would offer:

- (1) We recommend an amendment to clarify the bill should be read consistently with the child in need of care code.

This bill reflects the current DCF-drafted Foster Parent Bill of Rights, which summarizes various aspects of the current Child in Need of Care (CINC) code pertaining to foster parents. The current CINC code provides detailed requirements on issues such as notice of hearings, participation in court, court reports, and information-sharing to foster parents. HB2469 could create unintended legal inconsistencies unless the bill language references back to specific relevant sections of CINC. A simple way to do that would be to add an amendment in the introductory paragraph stating that this bill should be "consistent with the policies set out in KSA 38-2201" language. Inconsistencies within the statutory scheme can lead to frustration, decision-making delays, attorney time, and additional hearings; we recommend an amendment to ensure the proposed rights are referenced within the broader CINC language.

- (2) We recommend an amendment to include language covering kinship parents as well as foster parents.

Whereas HB 2468 recognizes the importance of family connections in a youth's life, and the possibility of being placed with kin parents, HB 2469 does not place kinship families at the center of the bill alongside foster parents. The Children's Alliance suggests clear language that ensure the rights for foster parents are also provided to kinship parents and non-related kin placements.

(3) Missing pieces

There are protections for Kansas foster parents in the CINC code that are not included within HB2469 – the right to submit a court report; the right to request a hearing if a placement change is requested after a child has been in the home for six months or longer; the right to file a grievance; and the right to receive a copy of the bill of rights. We would recommend if a comprehensive statement of rights is to be created as in HB2469, those significant foster parent rights would be included.

(4) Technical piece - references to KDHE will need amended

At this time, foster homes are licensed and regulated through DCF, not KDHE. The aspects of the bill referencing KDHE would need a technical fix.

We would be happy to work with committee members to explore considerations that would further strengthen this important piece of legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on HB 2469.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

The Bridge of Topeka, Topeka
CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park
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Eckerd, Wichita
EmberHope, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
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