



**Proponent Testimony on SB425 – Written Only
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
February 15, 2022**

Chair Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Pettey, 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. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for SB425.

As child welfare providers, we serve children and families after allegations of abuse or neglect are reported to DCF or law enforcement. When our system of care is functioning most effectively, DCF and law enforcement complete investigations and make referrals for family supports early -- well before initial reports of child maltreatment escalate into more serious situations of abuse or neglect. For this reason, referrals for severe and chronic maltreatment are relatively rare. However, the tragic reality is that some children suffer severe abuse at the hands of caregivers. Our system of investigating child maltreatment must allow DCF and law enforcement to collaborate effectively to protect the safety of Kansas children.

We are cognizant that DCF and law enforcement may have had different interpretations of the Child in Need of Care Code related to information sharing in child maltreatment investigations. We read the proposed language of SB425 as removing any perceived barriers to communication between DCF and law enforcement, without creating unintended consequences we can discern at this time. We believe SB245 will help keep children safe in Kansas and therefore, we ask for your support.

We appreciate your attention to the important issue of information sharing between law enforcement and DCF in child abuse and neglect investigations.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

The Bridge of Topeka, Topeka
CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park
DCCCA, Lawrence
Eckerd, Wichita
EmberHope, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
Foster the Cause, Topeka
FosterAdopt Connect, Olathe
Gathered, Derby
Great Circle, Lawrence

Kansas Children's Service League, Topeka
KVC Kansas, Olathe
KidsTLC, Olathe
Restoration Family Services, Wichita
Saint Francis Ministries, Salina
TFI Family Services, Topeka
The Children's Shelter, Lawrence
The Villages, Topeka
Wichita Children's Home, Wichita
Zoe's House, Kansas City