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JUSTICE OVERSIGHT

February 17th, 2021

Testimony in Support of HB 2345

House Children & Seniors Committee

Chair Rep. Susan Concannon

Vice Chair Charlotte Esau

Ranking Minority Member Rep. Jarrod Ousley

Good afternoon Chairwoman Concannon, Vice Chairwoman Esau, and Ranking Minority Member Ousley.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2345.

As you all know, there have been many problems within our child in need of care system for many years. Although, the current Secretary of Department of Children and Families is actively working to make positive in-house policy changes within the system. However, I believe the establishment of the office of the child advocate will aide in further alleviating the problems the Department of Children & Families has had in the past.

The establishment of the office of the child advocate will be a giant step forward for our child in need of care system, especially in terms of delivering relief to families in need. This office will be a center for parents & families to find comfort in their time of need. The child advocate will also aide the legislature in delivering timely intervention services into situations where legislators may not be able to help. Additionally, the child advocate will aide in tackling caseload backlogs and to expeditiously process cases. Beyond that, the office of the child advocate will bring some much-needed accountability into the foster care system in the state of Kansas by resolving complaints, conducting independent reviews of entities with 3+ reports of abuse or neglect, and supporting the interests of parents or children in court.

The State can and must do better for our most vulnerable children. I urge you to support HB 2345 to establish the office of the child advocate.

Sincerely,

Sen. Oletha Faust Goudeau