

January 28, 2020

Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in opposition of HB 2445
Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice

Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2445. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise -- and be -- a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that improve the lives of Kansas children and families. We oppose allowing children who run away to be placed in a juvenile detention facility for 24 hours. Research has shown "any intervention that places youths within a deviant group therefore risks exacerbating and consolidating their antisocial behavior."¹

In 2016, Kansas took a strong step forward toward improving its youth justice system. Through SB 367, we have seen a reduction in youth incarceration and increased investment in community-based alternatives. These evidence- and community-based alternatives cost less and are a more successful way to deal with youth involved in the justice system. We must continue to work toward having fewer Kansas children interact with the juvenile justice system, particularly youth who have not committed, or are suspected of, a crime. HB 2445 would take our state backward from our current achievement in having fewer justice-involved youth.

SB 367 was a significant step forward to decrease youth incarceration, while creating funding streams for alternatives to incarceration that decrease recidivism and keep youth in their communities. That legislation worked to reduce costs related to incarcerating children. HB 2445 could increase costs by temporarily housing more youth in juvenile detention facilities. In Kansas, it can cost \$112,128 per year to imprison a child (or roughly \$310 per day), but only \$9,960 per year for public education (or \$27 per day).²

Kansas Action for Children understands that runaway children are in need of services. However, these services should not include, or be provided by, the juvenile justice system. Kansas can do better than imprisoning children in need of support. A juvenile detention facility is no place for runaway youth -- it is harmful, not helpful.

For these reasons, Kansas Action for Children opposes allowing children who run away to be placed in a juvenile detention facility for 24 hours. We respectfully request the Committee oppose HB 2445.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Olejnik

Adrienne Olejnik
Vice President
Kansas Action for Children
adrienne@kac.org
785-232-0550

¹ Gatti, U., Tremblay, R.E., and Vitaro, F. (2009). "Iatrogenic effects of juvenile justice." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 50(8): 991-998.

² Youth First. Youth Incarceration in Kansas.

<https://www.nokidsinprison.org/explore/kansas/?section=race-interactive>

709 S Kansas | Suite 200
Topeka, KS 66603

P: 785-232-0550 | F: 785-232-0699
kac@kac.org | www.kac.org

Shaping policy that puts children first