

State of Kansas

Senate Chamber

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Chair Concannon and Honorable Members of the Children and Seniors House Committee,

I write in support of favorable passage of SB85. For some of you, it may seem quite similar to SB162 that came to this committee in 2019.

As you know, the number of children in Foster Care has remained fairly steady at approximately 7,000 children over the years. A newspaper headline from October 10, 2017, read: ***Lawmakers 'flabbergasted' that 74 foster children are missing.*** And yet yesterday, the count was 67 children were missing and in January, we had as many as 79 foster children missing. What's more concerning is the fact that 58% of our missing foster children are St. Francis placements and 45% of our missing foster children are from the Wichita region.

I believe SB85 is the vehicle for needed transparency in the state of Kansas. The passage of SB85 would assure the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch and the general public receive timely information about delays in out-of-home placement, for whatever reason, and children that have left their out-of-home placement.

The annual reporting requirement is also important in enabling the legislature and DCF to have informed, honest conversations about the timely placement of children into Foster homes. Additionally, this data will assist us in making appropriate legislative decisions that might further help our most vulnerable children in Kansas. It essentially changes a culture of withholding vital information. I firmly believe the sharing of information will serve to help lift the shadow of doubt that continues to shroud our Foster Care program.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Molly Baumgardner".

Molly Baumgardner