



**Proponent Testimony on HB2194
House Child Welfare and Foster Care
January 30, 2023**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Johnson, 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 19 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 testify in support of HB2194.

The Children's Alliance and our members support HB2194, the Representative Gail Finney foster care bill of rights. We see that both youth in foster care, and foster parents in Kansas, need a clear statement of rights.

Youth, especially older youth, need information and to feel empowered to ask questions and advocate for their voices to be heard and their opinions and desires to be considered.

HB2194 would affirm foster youth have the right to:

- Live in the least restrictive environment
- Stay with siblings when possible
- Have as few placements as possible
- Access to education and more

Foster parents are important partners in the Kansas child welfare system that directly care for the emotional, physical, and nurturing needs of youth. We believe a Kansas statement of legislative support for foster parent rights can enhance foster parent recruitment and retention, which is critically important for serving youth in foster care.

HB2194 would affirm foster parents have the right to:

- Respect and trust as a primary provider of care
- Receive standardized preservice training
- Receive information that is relevant to the care of a child
- Communicate with members of the child's professional team and more

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for HB2194. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

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

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