



**Proponent Testimony on HB 2580**  
**House Child Welfare and Foster Care Committee**  
**January 31, 2024**

Cornerstones of Care is a behavioral health organization with a 154-year history of providing prevention, treatment and support services to children and their families. The children that we serve have all experienced trauma. Trauma resulting from events, such as abuse or neglect, separation from/loss of a loved one, and witnessing or experiencing violence in their community, as well as trauma stemming from ongoing, cumulative experiences like poverty, addiction, and mental illness.

Cornerstones of Care is in support of HB 2580 and asks that the committee support HB 2580 to improve care and services for children and families in Kansas.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau estimates that up to 80% of youth in foster care have significant mental, emotional, or behavioral problems. The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified mental and behavioral health as the "greatest unmet health need for children and teens in foster care". HB 2580 addresses this need by specifically including these health needs in the language of the statute and authorizing the Secretary to consent for these needed treatments for youth in care. Currently K.S.A. 38-2217(a) limits the authority of the Secretary to consent to mental health treatment until after a child is adjudicated.

Cornerstones of Care believes that HB 2580 will allow for needed mental, emotional or behavioral health assessments and treatment to begin without undue delay.

- HB 2580 allows for a child to be assessed and treated for mental, emotional, or behavioral health needs immediately upon entering care.
- HB 2580 adds specific definitions to the Revised Code for Care of Children which better identifies the gamut of needed services.

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*Partnering for **safe** and **healthy** communities.*