



**Proponent Testimony on HB2115
House Children and Seniors Committee
February 4, 2021**

Chair Concannon and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 18 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. One of the purposes of the Alliance is to advocate for public policy that strengthens child and family well-being in Kansas.

Simply stated, the Alliance supports a standing joint oversight committee on child welfare systems issues. Children in our state have benefitted greatly from the attention turned to foster care from the Child Welfare Systems Task Force in 2017 and 2018, and from the Special Committee on Foster Care Oversight during the 2020 interim. For example, the Task Force pushed Kansas to be one of the first to adopt Family First Prevention Services Act programs, which has safely reduced the number of children in foster care in Kansas. Additionally, the Task Force pushed for addressing the psychiatric residential treatment facility waitlist and length of stay, which has led to the addition of nearly 100 beds and systems changes by multiple state agencies. Last summer, the Special Committee had extraordinarily productive conversations on important child welfare issues in Kansas. We look forward to continuing those conversations to support improved outcomes for children and families in Kansas.

Thank you again for your focus on the needs of children and families served by the child welfare system in Kansas. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park
DCCCA, Lawrence
Eckerd, Wichita
EmberHope, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
FosterAdopt Connect, Olathe
Great Circle, Lawrence
Kansas Children's Service League, Topeka

KVC Kansas, Olathe
KidsTLC, Olathe
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Mayetta
Restoration Family Services, Wichita
Saint Francis Ministries, Salina
TFI Family Services, Topeka
The Children's Shelter, Lawrence
The Villages, Topeka
Wichita Children's Home, Wichita