



TESTIMONY OF MIKE FONKERT
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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE
IN SUPPORT OF SB 12
FEBRUARY 3, 2021

Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

My name is Mike Fonkert; I am a Campaign Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed supports SB 12. Creating performance-based contracts for evidence-based prevention and early intervention is an important step in ensuring a foster care system that is effective and accountable.

The foster care system in Kansas is in crisis.¹ Too many Kansas children are in the foster care system and they are entering at racially disproportionate rates. Kansas children are staying in foster care for too long and they often experience dangerously high instability in their placements. It is too difficult for Kansas children in foster care to find permanency. Less than 17% of children attend the same school as they did prior to their entry into the foster care system.² The graduation rate for foster care kids who aged out of the system this fiscal year is only 16.4%.³ Racial disparities among kids in the foster care system are continuing to rise. In state fiscal year 2021, black children in Kansas were 2.08 times more likely than white children to be in foster care.⁴ This disparity in Kansas has risen every year since 2015.⁵ More than 11% of kids leaving the system are re-entering within 12 months.⁶

¹ Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope. "Addressing the Foster Care Crisis in Kansas - Update: December 2019." http://www.rebuildhopekansas.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/sfrh_2019_update_report.pdf

² Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Attending Same School Success Indicator FY 2021." http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2021DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/Same%20School_Success%20Indicator_FY2021.pdf

³ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Adults Ending Custody with the Secretary will have Completed Grade 12 SFY2021." http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2021DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/Completed_grd12_FY2021.pdf

⁴ Analysis by Kansas Appleseed using linear forecast of population from Census Bureau (<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2010-2019/state/asrh/sc-est2019-alldata5.csv>) and demographic data from DCF (<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/FosterCareDemographicReports.aspx>)

⁵ Id.

⁶ Kansas Department for Children and Families. "Re-entry to Foster Care in 12 months FY202." http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Documents/FY2021DataReports/FCAD_ContractOutcomes/ReenteredFC_12_months_FY2021.pdf



Addressing these issues must include a clear plan of action on the front end. Early intervention has a profound effect on outcomes for kids in foster care.⁷ Evidence-based prevention and training are effective at reducing placement instability and reducing the risk of a breakdown in a child's continuum of care.⁸

Focusing on prevention and early intervention will undoubtedly also be cost effective. Studies find that prevention and early interventions that address the symptoms of the child and also provide parenting education and support are the most effective at reducing system costs.⁹

Requiring a clear implementation plan for performance-based contracts focusing on prevention and early intervention is an important step in addressing the ongoing foster care crisis. For this reason, Kansas Appleseed urges the passage of SB12.

⁷ Wade, M. "Effect of Foster Care Intervention on Trajectories of General and Specific Psychopathology Among Children With Histories of Institutional Rearing." *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2018.

⁸ Konijn, C. "Prevention of Instability in Foster Care: A Case File Review Study." *Child Youth Care Forum*. 2020. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10566-020-09584-z>

⁹ Doyle, J. "Economics of Child Protection: Maltreatment, Foster Care, and Intimate Partner Violence." *Annual Review of Economics*. 2018. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-economics-080217-053237>