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Kerrie Lonard, Child Advocate

Laura Kelly, Governor

**Written Neutral Testimony to House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care:  
HB 2371 Limiting the number of cases of children in need of care  
assigned to case managers.  
February 20, 2023**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as the Child Advocate with the Kansas Division of the Child Advocate, Office of Public Advocates, as a neutral of HB 2371: Limiting the number of cases of children in need of care assigned to case managers. The Division of the Child Advocate (KDCA) provides independent oversight and increased accountability to ensure that children who are alleged to be a child in need of care or adjudicated as a child in need of care and their families receive adequate coordination of child welfare services, for child maltreatment prevention, protection and care through services offered by the Department for Children and Families, the Department for Aging and Disability Services, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and Environment and juvenile courts.

KDCA has identified caseload size and management as key factors impacting quality of services and workforce retention. KDCA noted in its 2022 annual report that recruitment, retention, and training of a robust child welfare workforce has been a historic struggle in Kansas and nationwide. High staff turnover, low wage salaries and unmanageable caseloads have plagued child welfare. Managing caseload size truly starts with prevention. As we focus efforts upstream, expanding our prevention services for children and families across Kansas, increasing the numbers of children who can safely remain with their families, incrementally may reduce the number of children entering care. This in turn will directly impact the caseload size and management. Ensuring that our case managers receive the necessary training and supervision support, in conjunction with maximum caseload sizes, is critical in ensuring high quality services to support children and family wellbeing.

Whether caseload management is addressed through statutory legislation or through legislation focused on performance-based contract expectations and administrative policies, it is a critical conversation. The Child Family and Service Review (CFSR) process includes assessment of systemic factors in determining whether a state's child welfare system is effectively promoting safety, permanency and well-being of the children and families served in the state. System factors include the size of caseloads and what impact this may have on case management

activities such as timely and accurate data entry and timely court filing.<sup>1</sup> Current child welfare best practice standards, such as those identified by the Council on Accreditation (COA), recognize the importance of workload and “caseload sizes (that) are sufficiently small.”<sup>2</sup> Rather than set caseload numbers, considering workloads, such as service volume and time necessary to meet a child or family’s needs, allows case managers to dedicate the attention necessary on individualized case plan/goals.

Prioritizing factors that impact workforce recruitment and retention, such as manageable caseloads, supports improved child welfare outcomes. KDCA appreciates your time and attention to recognizing the importance that children and families receive high quality services.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://coanet.org/>