



**Proponent Testimony on HB2448
House Children and Seniors
March 24, 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. The Children's Alliance supports HB2448 as one of the most critical bills the Kansas legislature could pass this year to help children in foster care in a tangible, immediate way.

HB2448 is needed to support youth with complex needs and families that love them. A priority for the Children's Alliance is improving our state's response to youth with complex needs, which includes youth that struggle with acting out behaviors that can lead to juvenile justice charges. Research shows that most youth with these behaviors have a family trauma history – just like most other children in foster care. When our efforts are successful, we can locate permanent, adoptive homes for children with juvenile justice history. However, the statute (KSA 65-516) needing updated by H2448 currently bars foster families caring for youth with juvenile justice backgrounds from providing care for other youth in need. This means adoptive parents and custodians must make heart-breaking and needless choices between foster children and former foster children, now part of the family.

As you will recall, DCF, providers, and the Children's Alliance stood in support of a similar bill earlier this year. We request the support of this Committee to help make this happen.

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