



**Proponent Testimony on HB2377
House Child Welfare and Foster Care Committee
February 15, 2023**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 19 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. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB2377.

HB2377 waives fees for requesting birth certificates for children in foster care and requires the office of vital statistics to honor expediting the processing of birth certificates for children in foster care upon the original journal entry placing a child in DCF custody.

Accessing birth certificates for children in foster care can be time-consuming and unduly bureaucratic. As you can imagine, accessing birth certificates for children in care is a regular practice. When children come into care, we need to request a birth certificate for the file and as a reference for various purposes, such as applying for driver's licenses, gathering documents to support a youth preparing for adulthood, and completing adoptions.

What we find is that accessing birth certificates for children in foster care can be much more difficult than applying for your own child, because the Office of Vital Statistics may not accept the court order provided, requiring us to go back to court, get new court orders, resubmit the request, and wait for the certificate. The Vital Statistics office practices have delayed adoption permanency on multiple occasions.

We support HB2377 for eliminating fees for children in foster care, and for identifying the initial court order is adequate proof of the need. We also support the time frames required by HB2377.

We would ask you to expand the bill language to say Secretary "or designee" which is analogous to how the CINC code allows for the Secretary to have case managers execute daily work for children in foster care. Most frequently, the child welfare case management contractors are seeking birth certificates. Case management providers use standard DCF forms to show their status as designee for purposes of implementing case management responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB2377. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Kansas City
DCCCA, Lawrence
Eckerd Connects, Wichita
EmberHope, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
FosterAdopt Connect, Olathe
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