

627 SW Topeka Blvd | Topeka, KS 66603



**Proponent Testimony on HB 2580
House Child Welfare and Foster Care Committee
January 31, 2024**

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, human trafficking 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 HB2580.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau estimates that up to 80% of youth in foster care have significant mental, emotional, or behavioral problems. As you are aware based on your work on this committee, it's imperative for the DCF Secretary to have the ability to coordinate behavioral health care for children in foster care. HB2580 addresses a gap in the existing statute by specifically including behavioral health needs in the language of the statute and authorizing the Secretary to consent for these needed treatments for youth in care.

HB2580 will allow for needed mental, emotional, or behavioral health assessments and treatment to begin without undue delay. HB2580 allows for a child to be assessed and treated for mental, emotional, or behavioral health needs immediately upon entering care. And, HB2580 adds specific definitions to the Revised Code for Care of Children, which better identifies the gamut of needed services.

We ask that you support HB 2580 to improve care and services for children and families in Kansas. I am happy to 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

Gathered, Derby

ICT-SOS, Wichita

KidsTLC, Olathe

KVC Kansas, Olathe

O'Connell Children's Shelter, Lawrence

Rainbows United, Wichita

Restoration Family Services, Wichita

Saint Francis Ministries, Salina

TFI Family Services, Topeka

The Villages, Topeka

Wichita Children's Home, Wichita

Zoe's House, Kansas City