

Testimony for Justine Burton

To: House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

RE: Opposition to HB2445

Members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee,

My name is Justine Burton and I have been working with kids for over 30 years. The current focus of my work is with youth that are aging out of the foster care system. I believe it's a crime within itself to even think about locking up runaway youth. What is the positive? It cannot be to benefit the youth. HB2445 would create more problems for the young people it would impact, which can be a causal factor for:

- PTSD
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Criminal elements
- Suicide

Many of the youth that would be impacted by HB2445 are dealing with being removed from parents and thrown into a group homes or other facilities and, through no fault of their own, are being punished. And now, HB2445 wants to compound their trauma by punishing them again because the state system is not working? This doesn't make sense. The State of Kansas and those that run its agencies are the guardians for these children. Many of these children were taken out of an abusive environment, yet, the State of Kansas, their guardian, would put them back into a harmful environment. HB2445 would cause irreparable harm.

Please oppose HB2445.

Sincerely,

Justine Burton

Founder/CEO; StopGap, Inc.

www.stopgapinc.org