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March 13, 2019

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Children's Alliance of Kansas
In support of SB 193
Before the Committee on Health and Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 193 on behalf of Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 17 private, non-profit child welfare agencies. We were formed in 1954 to assist licensed agencies providing residential and foster care services in Kansas and have evolved over the past 65 years to offer a unique mix of networking, advocacy and education. Unlike sister associations across the country, our purpose is not to advocate for agencies.

Our members have been clear – our purpose is to drive system-level change to strengthen children and families in Kansas. Alliance members are as diverse as the services they provide. We represent small agencies with a handful of employees and large agencies that span multiple states with thousands of employees. The majority of our members' employees are social workers and these employees are located across multiple states.

Senate Bill 193 Addresses the Underlying Causes of Kansas' Foster Care System Workforce Shortage.

Issue #1: Lack of Licensure Reciprocity and Portability.

SB 193 allows Kansas agencies to recruit and retain out-of-state social workers who are licensed and in good standing and have no disciplinary record in other states through its licensure reciprocity provisions. Providers who employ qualified licensed social workers in other states will be able to more easily relocate staff with these changes. These staff will also be more able to serve multiple state jurisdictions. Additionally, providers who serve border communities will increase the pool of licensed professionals from whom they can easily recruit.

The Legislature has recognized that the behavioral health system in Kansas is in crisis. This issue is even more acute in our rural/frontier counties. The 2018 Mental Health Taskforce reported a shortage of behavioral health professionals in Kansas' rural and frontier counties. Allowing licensure reciprocity helps address this issue by expanding the potential pool of behavioral health professionals available to work in Kansas.

Issue #2: Stringent Kansas Requirements for Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Work (LSCSW)

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As amended, SB 193 now also addresses the second cause of a decreased supply of licensed social workers: the additional hours a master level social worker needs in order to complete their clinical license requirements. Currently, Kansas requires master level social work graduate applicants for a clinical license to complete an additional thousand hours of post-graduate supervised work experience in a clinical setting and an additional fifty hours of supervision. This far exceeds the requirements of the vast majority of states. By reducing the hours of post-graduate supervised work experience in a clinical setting to 3,000 hours and 100 hours of direct supervisory meetings, Kansas will bring itself in line with the national average. This will lower the high burden and cost placed upon LSCSWs. In turn, this will decrease out-migration of social workers who currently can more easily complete licensure in neighboring states.

SB 193, as amended, now addresses both in-migration and out-migration concerns regarding social workers. By allowing licensure reciprocity, Kansas can increase the pool of qualified social workers who Kansas employers can hire. And by bringing post-graduate clinical hour requirements in line with the national average, Kansas can better retain social workers who already reside within Kansas.