

State of Kansas

Senate Chamber

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Senate Public Health and Welfare Chair Suellentrop and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a proponent of SB 122. While serving on the Senate Education Committee, we have heard repeated testimony about the difficulties children placed in Foster Care have experienced in attempting to keep up with their education because they are often shifted from one area of the state to another. I've also heard from many Foster parents that juggling between the different state KanCare providers is a challenge.

SB 122 is an "outside the box" effort to provide some consistency for children in Foster Care, Foster Care parents, DCF and their contractors. Once a child enters Foster Care, a money-follows-the child model would be employed for their education, housing, transportation, food, and health services.

The single-provider approach for health services would include an RFP process, overseen by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, for a nonprofit managed care organization to administer Medicaid services. The State Department of Education may contract with one or more organizations to provide on-line academic instruction. The on-line system must be a part of a central Distance Learning system that provides courses for credit and allows children to make academic progress. There would also be an academic/career support system provided by a state-based national nonprofit organization. They would be tasked with evaluating student progress, preparing individual student plans for personal and academic achievement and a dedicated case manager.

In a realistic manner, SB 122 doesn't attempt to take an unrealistic bite from the apple. In the manner of a "pilot program," it cascades in implementation for the next three years; in USD 501 in 2020, USD 259 in 2021, and USD 500 in 2022.

I believe our vulnerable children in the Kansas Foster system deserve our efforts to change the inconsistent manner in which they receive education and care. I believe that if we continue down the path we've always trod, we will continue to have inadequate and flawed outcomes.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Molly Baumgardner