



**Proponent Testimony on HB2632
House Children and Seniors Committee
February 16, 2022**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Esau, 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 21 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 share our support for HB2632.

As child welfare providers, we serve children and families after allegations of abuse or neglect are reported to DCF or law enforcement. In some instances, especially involving young children who are not yet fully verbal and are the most vulnerable to caregiver abuse and neglect, investigations require DCF seek the consultation of medical professionals. The signs and indicators of severe child physical abuse, medical abuse, chronic neglect, or even child torture, are not always readily apparent – even to medical care providers. In child welfare, there is the risk of a false positive – determining a child has been abused when he has not; and a false negative – determining a child has not been abused when he has. Avoiding either of these errors is critically important to the wellbeing and children and their families. HB2632 would increase the capacity of our medical provider community to refer, assess, identify, and intervene appropriately in situations of child maltreatment or neglect.

We look forward to learning more clearly how the CARE referral process for physical or medical abuse or neglect examinations will intersect with child sexual abuse investigations that are typically served through Children's Advocacy Centers. An important principle of child welfare practice is to avoid subjecting any child alleged to have been abused to multiple interviews and multiple exams; both for protection of the child's mental health and for the protection of any law enforcement investigation. We are optimistic that DCF, law enforcement, Children's Advocacy Centers, and the CARE providers will develop clear guidance as to how the CARE network would interact with the Children's Advocacy Center processes in instances of child sexual abuse allegations.

We support building a stronger network of medical providers and ensuring young children can be assessed for child maltreatment and neglect when recommended by a trained physician. We ask for your support of HB2632.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

The Bridge of Topeka, Topeka
CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park
DCCCA, Lawrence
Eckerd, Wichita
EmberHope, Wichita
Florence Crittenton, Topeka
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Restoration Family Services, Wichita
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