



**Testimony on SB85, Requiring Notice of Certain Situations Involving Children
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
February 2, 2021**

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 18 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. One of the purposes of the Alliance is to advocate for public policy that strengthens child and family well-being in Kansas. We thank this Committee for your concern for meeting the needs of youth in foster care in Kansas.

Generally, SB85 would codify existing policies and procedures for case management providers.

SB85 would enact into law policies and practices that foster care case management providers currently follow in reporting to DCF on two different issues. First, case management providers report youth missing from placement – in almost all instances, this means youth who have run away from placement. Second, case management providers report youth who have slept overnight in any location not intended as a residence for children in foster care. SB85 would change that case management providers would be required to identify any gap in available, appropriate placements for the impacted youth. Reporting the absence of appropriate placement options for children could create a positive opportunity to create a data-driven analysis of missing placement options for children in Kansas. DCF currently tracks data and reports on youth that runaway at <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/Agency/YRR/Documents/YouthRecoveryReport.pdf>.

We recommend clarifying Section 1(b)(1)(B), requiring reporting if a youth sleeps in a “facility under the control of the contractor.” Case management providers operate two types of “facilities.” The first are business and case management offices -- not intended for overnight care of foster youth. However, the second are licensed facilities intended for placement of youth in foster care, such as PRTF, QRTPs, and youth residential centers. SB85 may need to be clarified to indicate that reporting is required for such child that has “**spent any overnight period in a facility, not licensed as a placement for foster youth, under the control of the contractor.**”

Beyond reporting, this legislature has options to directly support meeting the needs of runaway youth and youth without placement. SB85 is focused on the youth with the most complex behavioral health needs in foster care. These youth are likely to have a history of family trauma, crossover youth behavioral challenges, significant mental health needs, and substance use addiction.

Effective intervention for these behaviors can be complicated by intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The Children's Alliance considers the following as priorities for this population:

- Continue to invest in Family First Prevention Services Act early-intervention opportunities before youth are placed in foster care
- Expand services for adolescent substance use withdrawal management and addiction treatment
- Build specialty services to meet the juvenile justice needs of the crossover youth population
- Fully fund the I/DD waiver and expand I/DD waiver services
- Fully fund crisis intervention for youth
- Continue and expand the use of telehealth to maintain therapeutic relationships for youth who are not yet stable in placement
- Increase the reimbursement rate and service array for behavioral health services
- Address the gaps created by juvenile justice reform (SB367), in access to secure care and in effective responses by the juvenile justice system

We recommend updating Section 1(b)(4) reporting on Child Welfare Systems Task Force priorities:

During the two years since the Child Welfare Systems Task Force, significant steps have been taking to implement the Task Force's priority recommendations relevant to this population, such as:

- Implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act;
- Improving youth access to PRTF;
- Collaborating across systems on responding to needs of crossover youth; and
- Prioritizing implementation of crisis response for Kansas youth.

Additionally, after the Task Force's report, multiple important recommendations from the Special Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform, the Special Committee on Foster Care Oversight, the Crossover Youth Working groups from 2019, and the Judicial Council report on Crossover Youth from 2020, have been offered relevant to youth in foster care with complex needs (some of which are highlighted above). The Children's Alliance agrees that it is important for DCF to identify when assistance is needed from the legislature to address the needs of youth in foster care. We hope this process can be fluid and remain relevant going forward. We recommend updating and replacing Section 1(b)(4) referencing the Child Welfare Systems Task Force: ***“DCF shall make an annual report to the legislature addressing any legislative action needed to address needs of youth with runaway behaviors or without access to stable placement.”***

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information on the provisions of SB85. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

CALM, Emporia
Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park
DCCCA, Lawrence
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EmberHope, Wichita
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