



**Proponent Testimony on SB460 – Written Only
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
March 1, 2022**

Chair Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Pettey, 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 SB460.

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. SB460 would increase the capacity of our medical provider community to refer, assess, identify, and intervene appropriately in situations of child maltreatment or neglect.

Building the CARE referral process and network for physical or medical abuse or neglect examinations for children under 5 – nonverbal and pre-verbal children - will add a critical component supporting the safety of Kansas children. In our state today, Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate a multidisciplinary team approach for interviews and examinations for sexually abused children, and that model is an essential part of our forensic assessment of children. However, our state lacks a comprehensive approach to forensic medical examinations for very young children – those at risk of the gravest harms of abuse. We believe the network and collaboration that SB460 will support between DCF, law enforcement, Children's Advocacy Centers, and the medical community will save children's lives and will protect our youngest, most vulnerable children from the most heinous forms of severe and chronic abuse and neglect.

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 SB460.

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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
Foster the Cause, Topeka
FosterAdopt Connect, Olathe
Gathered, Derby
Great Circle, Lawrence

Kansas Children's Service League, Topeka
KVC Kansas, Olathe
KidsTLC, Olathe
Restoration Family Services, Wichita
Saint Francis Ministries, Salina
TFI Family Services, Topeka
O'Connell Children's Shelter, Lawrence
The Villages, Topeka
Wichita Children's Home, Wichita
Zoe's House, Kansas City