



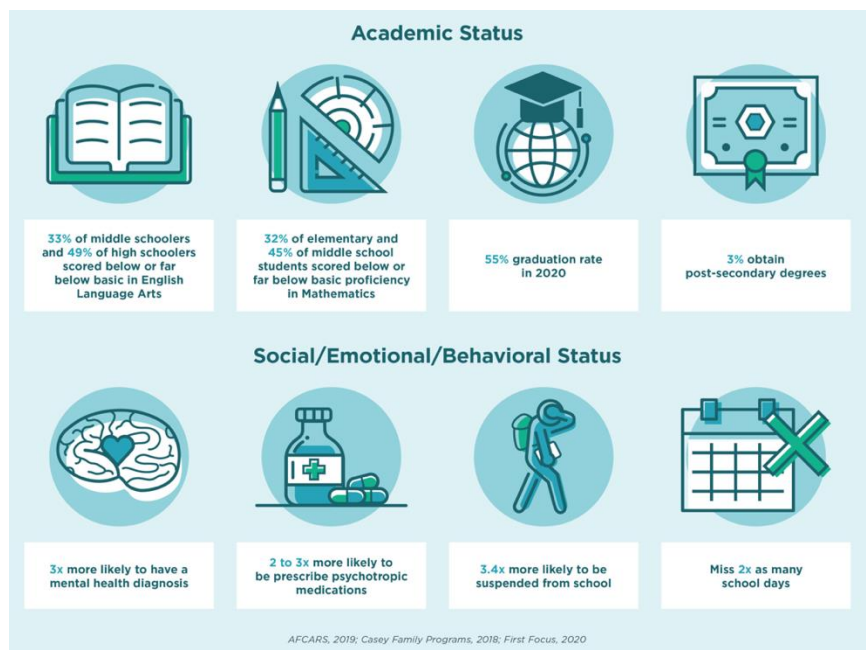
Chairman Goetz, Vice Chair Hill, Ranking Minority Member Winn and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

KVC Kansas is a foster care case management provider, child placing agency, outpatient behavioral health services provider and residential treatment provider. KVC Kansas has been a provider of care for the most vulnerable Kansans for more than 50 years. We are the contracted foster care case management provider for the Department for Children and Families (DCF) in catchment areas 3 and 6, serving Johnson, Douglas, Shawnee and several surrounding rural counties extending to the Southern Nebraska border.

As Vice President of Operations for KVC Kansas, it is my responsibility to ensure every child, teen and family we serve has access to healthcare (mental, behavioral and physical), educational services and community-based resources. This involves partnerships with many community organizations who provide mental and behavioral health services such as crisis response, assessment, therapy and case management. KVC also works closely with physical healthcare providers, schools and agencies that provide resources and support to families navigating serious challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony for HB 2320 which would grant youth in the custody of the Secretary of DCF the right to enroll in any school district, regardless of their placement location or placement status and ensure timely transfer of records from district to district.

Youth in foster care face steep challenges to academic success, often due to instability and frequent school changes. According to the U.S. Department of Education, they are significantly more likely than their peers to encounter barriers that lead to troubling outcomes, including lower academic achievement, a higher likelihood of repeating a grade due to poor academic performance, and lower high school graduation rates. Without access to education and the right support, youth in foster care must face an uphill battle to succeed in school and build a stable future. Addressing the barriers youth in foster care experience when enrolling in and attending school is critical to giving them the opportunities they deserve.





Despite the child welfare system's constant efforts to wrap services and supports around caregivers and children, some youth in foster care face immense instability, including frequent placement changes and disruptions in their education. These disruptions compound the impact and trauma of family separation. Each move can mean a new school, new teachers, new classmates, and shifting academic expectations, all of which contribute to learning loss and emotional distress. National research indicates that youth in foster care lose four to six months of academic progress with every school change. Given that many children in foster care experience multiple placements, the cumulative effect can be devastating to their educational outcomes.

As of December 10, 2016, children "awaiting foster care placement" were removed from the definition of "homeless children and youth" as set forth in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Because of this, schools require foster care case management providers to provide proof of address (ex. Placement Agreement) to enroll youth in school. For youth who do not yet have a long-term placement provider, this is a significant disruption to consistent educational services.

Case management providers ensure high-acuity youth are matched with placement providers who can meet their needs, provide daytime supervision when youth are awaiting long-term placement, and remain focused on supporting families in addressing abuse, neglect, and behavioral concerns so they can safely achieve permanency. Whether a youth's family is working toward safe reunification, or the case management provider is supporting the youth in achieving another permanency option, it is essential youth have stability in their education, as education is vital to their life-long wellbeing.

HB2320 seeks to provide much-needed stability by:

- Allowing youth in foster care to remain in their school of origin or enroll in a district that best supports their academic, social and emotional needs, regardless of their placement location or status.
- Ensuring the timely transfer of records from district to district, preventing unnecessary barriers and delays in the enrollment and delivery of educational services.
- Recognizing that education is a critical stabilizing force in a child's life and that continuity in schooling is just as important as stability in placement.

Educational stability is a lifeline for youth in foster care, providing the consistency they need to thrive while maintaining connections with peers and caring adults. It also contributes to the likelihood that youth will achieve and maintain long-term placement, reducing placement disruptions that negatively impact youth and strain the child welfare system. Casey Family Programs reported Studies have also shown that embedding



the resource family within a **broader network of social support** is associated with fewer placement disruptions.¹

For example, foster families that have a solid network of social support are likely to have fewer placement disruptions. Stable educational services for youth are a prime example of this social support. When youth have access to steady education and consistent services during the day, foster parents are better equipped to provide a stable home. With this stability and support in place, foster parents can focus their time and energy on meeting the youth's mental, emotional and behavioral health needs, giving them the best chance to heal and succeed. Youth experiencing more stability in education can have better academic performance, less behavioral challenges and improved mental health.

Key Benefits

1. Improved Educational Outcomes: By reducing school mobility, this bill helps ensure youth in foster care stay on track for graduation, participate in extracurricular activities, and maintain relationships with teachers and peers who provide essential support.
2. Alignment with Federal Law: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) already mandates that states prioritize school stability for youth in foster care. This legislation aligns Kansas policy with federal expectations, ensuring compliance and access to potential funding opportunities.
3. Increased Opportunities for Success: Ensuring youth in foster care can access schools that can meet their educational as well as social and emotional needs gives them the best chance to thrive academically and personally.
4. Reduced Administrative Burdens: When a youth in foster care moves, caseworkers, schools, and foster parents must navigate a complex enrollment process, often causing delays. This bill streamlines the process, ensuring that youth can enroll and continue learning without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

Passing HB 2320 is a critical step toward ensuring educational stability and success for some of Kansas' most vulnerable children. No child should have to sacrifice their education because of circumstances beyond their control. By granting youth in foster care the right to choose a school district that best serves their needs, we empower them with the stability and opportunities they need to thrive and allow for circumstances that contribute towards increased stability overall.

I urge the committee to support this bill and give Kansas youth in foster care the educational stability they deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

¹ <https://www.casey.org/strategies-improve-placement-stability/>



Respectfully,

Angela Hedrick LPC

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