



Proponent Testimony – HB 2320
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
February 11, 2026

Chair Goetz, Vice Chair Brantley, Ranking Member Ousley and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony regarding HB 2320. My name is Kristalle Hedrick, and I serve as CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas, the statewide association representing private nonprofit providers delivering child welfare services across the state. Our members work directly with at-risk children every day, including supporting their educational stability during times of placement change.

HB 2320 would grant youth experiencing foster care the opportunity to be enrolled in any school district regardless of their placement status or physical location. The bill would also require timely transfer of records between districts when enrollment changes occur, removing unnecessary barriers that disrupt children's access to education.

In SFY 2025:

- On September 30, 2025, there were 5,523 children in out-of-home placement in Kansas.
- Statewide performance data show that for children exiting custody, educational progression (advancement to the next grade level) was 88.3% for the 12-month period ending in SFY 25 data reporting.
- For placement stability outcomes across the system, the rate of moves per 1,000 days in care was approximately 6.7 moves as of late 2025 reporting.
- Average length of stay (time spent in foster care) was 24.7 months.

Though data on school enrollment changes specifically are not publicly posted yet for SFY 25, the number of children in foster care remains high, and instability in placement and education continues to be a critical concern that impacts children's academic outcomes.

Beginning in December 2016, youth in foster care were removed from eligibility under the revised definitions in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for automatic school selection rights. As a result, providers in Kansas have been required to provide proof of address to enroll youth in school (typically a placement agreement). For many youth, particularly those without a long-term placement provider, this requirement causes significant disruption, delays in enrollment, and sometimes extended periods without access to educational services.

HB 2320 would offer children and youth in foster care an opportunity to remain in their school of origin or enroll in a district that is best suited to support their academic needs —

627 SW Topeka Blvd | Topeka, KS 66603



regardless of where their placement happens to be. The bill would also ensure timely transfer of records between sending and receiving districts, preventing unnecessary delays in enrollment and initiation of specialized services.

Children experiencing foster care are among the most vulnerable in our state. They often have endured trauma, multiple placement changes, and disrupted schooling — all of which negatively affect academic progress and long-term achievement. Ensuring continuity and stability in education is not a secondary issue; it is fundamental to improving their life outcomes.

HB 2320 is a critical step toward eliminating artificial barriers to educational access and providing stability for students who are living in care. This bill promotes continuity of learning, supports coordination between schools and child welfare providers, and aligns state practice with the best interests of children.

For these reasons, the Children's Alliance of Kansas respectfully urges the Committee to support HB 2320 to improve care and services for children and youth in Kansas.

Kristalle Hedrick

A business card for Kristalle Hedrick, LMSW, Chief Executive Officer of Children's Alliance of Kansas. The card has a dark blue background with a light beige section on the left containing a circular photo of Kristalle Hedrick. To the right of the photo, her name and title are listed, followed by contact information: address (627 SW Topeka Blvd, Topeka KS 66603), phone number (785) 764-7465, email (khedrick@childally.org), and website (www.childally.org). On the right side of the card, there is the Children's Alliance of Kansas logo and a circular seal that reads "CERTIFIED SWAPP LEADER". At the bottom of the card, the text "Individualization | Relator | Strategic | Futuristic | Responsibility" is displayed in white.