



Proponent Testimony on HB 2075– Written Only
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
March 5, 2025

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Clifford, Ranking Member Holscher, and Members of the Committee, my name is Kristalle Hedrick, 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. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2075.

HB 2075 will require that a permanency hearing for a child in foster care be held within nine months of a child's removal from the home and at least every nine months thereafter.

The Children's Alliance believes HB 2075 will prioritize legal permanency and create a shared, statewide sense of urgency that children deserve. Minimizing a child's time away from their family and safely achieving permanency through reunification, guardianship, adoption or the recently implemented SOUL Family option is paramount in ensuring children find safety, connection, and healing. Any opportunity to implement strategies that help achieve timely legal permanency should be supported to prevent children from lingering in foster care.

Research illustrates the connection between time with family and a broad array of developmental, mental health and physical health outcomes. A child's separation from their family places stress on their brain, triggering the release of stress hormones that directly link to adverse health outcomes, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, sleep problems, heart disease, impaired emotional regulation, and weight gain. These adverse experiences can cause brain development to be significantly disrupted, to the extent that children are impacted well into their adult years.

The likelihood of being able to return home or find permanency through other means is significantly reduced the longer a child or youth is separated from their family. A comprehensive analysis of youth formerly in foster care reveals that they exhibit worse educational and employment outcomes than their counterparts never in foster care.¹ They also encounter homelessness and the criminal justice system at higher rates than other youth. Without substantive reforms that prioritize preventing and minimizing child separation from family, child

¹ "Why is it imperative to minimize children's time away from family?" *Annie E. Casey Foundation*. October 16, 2024. <https://www.casey.org/minimize-time-away/>

welfare system involvement will persist as a risk factor that deepens and perpetuates health, economic, and social inequities.

We ask that you support HB 2075 to prioritize timely permanency for children experiencing foster care in Kansas.

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Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

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FosterAdopt Connect, Kansas City

Kansas Children's Service League, Topeka

KidsTLC, Olathe

KVC Kansas, Olathe

O'Connell Children's Shelter, Lawrence

Rainbows United, Wichita

Restoration Family Services, Wichita

Saint Francis Ministries, Salina

TFI Family Services, Topeka

The Villages, Topeka

Wichita Children's Home, Wichita

Zoe's House, Kansas City