

627 SW Topeka Blvd | Topeka, KS 66603



**Proponent Testimony on HB2281 – Written Only
House Health and Human Services Committee
February 15, 2022**

Chair Landwehr, Vice Chair Eplee, Ranking Member Ruiz, 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 HB2281.

Children's Alliance members serve youth in Kansas that are struggling with suicidal thoughts daily – whether in our PRTFs, QRTPS, youth hospitals, or in foster care homes with safety plans awaiting access to higher levels of care. We also support parents who can experience severe despair and suicidal thoughts when experiencing a child removed from the home; struggling with substance use disorders; or struggling with acute mental health challenges. We support HB2281 as a critical component in early support and intervention for families in Kansas.

As a representative on the Mental Health Modernization and Reform Committee over the last two interim sessions, I learned about the opportunity to implement the 988 suicide prevention and mental health hotline in Kansas. We appreciate the support of that workgroup, and the work of this Committee, to ensure that the 988 hotline can be fully funded to provide a local response and local referrals for Kansans in crisis.

The 988 hotline is a critical piece in our continuum of care for Kansans in mental health crisis. We ask for your support of this bill.

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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
The Children's Shelter, Lawrence
The Villages, Topeka
Wichita Children's Home, Wichita
Zoe's House, Kansas City