

DCF LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



January 30, 2023

TESTIMONY OF

Melinda Kline and Stacy Tidwell, Deputy Directors of Permanency and Youth Programs
Kansas Department for Children and Families

TESTIMONY ON

HB 2194

Chair

Representative Concannon

Vice Chair

Representative Johnson

Ranking Minority

Representative Ousley

and

Members of the Committee

SUMMARY OF ISSUE & DCF POSITION

Chairwoman Concannon and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2194.

The bill creates statutory provisions for enacting the Representative Gail Finney Memorial Foster Care Bill of Rights establishing certain rights for children in need of care and foster parents by amending the Kansas Code for Care of Children.

Every child placed in foster care should have the right to be safe where they live, live with their siblings, when possible, be connected to their family, feel loved and a sense of belonging, have access to what is needed for success in school, and when developmentally appropriate be engaged in their case planning, placement changes, and court hearings. Youth who are given a voice and a stake in their future become active participants in their lives.

Kansas foster parents are asked to take on an incredibly difficult role by providing loving and safe environments for children that have experienced childhood trauma and instability in their lives. They play an integral, indispensable, and vital role in the State's effort to care for dependent children displaced from their biological families/caregivers. It is in the best interest of Kansas' child welfare system to acknowledge foster parents as active and participating members of this system and they should be supported throughout the journey of the child's court involvement.

This bill is an important part of better serving vulnerable children and youth placed in foster care. Every child should have the right to feel safe where they live, to be treated with respect, to be provided food, clothing and the tools needed to experience normalcy in their childhood like their non-system involved peers. This bill also provides crucial support to and outlines rights of foster parents providing a vital service for vulnerable system involved children and youth.

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) indicates that HB 2194 would have minimal fiscal impact as there may be costs associated with creating awareness, printing, posting and potential training.

DCF supports HB 2194 and asks that it be passed favorably.

Thank you.