



January 24, 2024

John Wilson, President and CEO
Kansas Action for Children
Proponent Verbal Testimony on HB 2536
House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care

Chair Concannon and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2536, the SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option. My name is John Wilson, and I'm the President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. KAC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive.

Kansas Action for Children is proud to work with a network of statewide partners to build the understanding, resources, services, and administrative and legal infrastructure needed to make SOUL Family a legal permanency option in Kansas.

Sadly, the current legal permanency options do not meet the needs of all young people in foster care. Too many children age out of foster care without the stability of a lifelong family and trusted adult relationships.

Policy that is informed by those closest to the issue is more likely to lead positive, sustainable outcomes. SOUL Family is unique and transformative because it was created by young people.

We support SOUL Family because it would increase the number of young people who exit foster care with permanent, legal relationships with trusted and supportive adults, while still allowing them to maintain close and healthy relationships with siblings and birth family members. **This committee knows the issues impacting the child welfare system, and therefore knows that bold and innovative solutions that center the needs of young people are essential.**

Thank you for your willingness to learn about SOUL Family and for the opportunity to speak today. Please reach out to me at john@kac.org if you have any questions.