

Kansas Citizen Review Panel

Custody to Transition

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01/03/2024

Subject: Legislative Support for SOUL Family Permanency Option

Dear Members of the Committee,

We, the Custody to Transition Citizen Review Panel members, are writing to collectively express our strong support for the Support, Opportunity, Unity, and Legal Relationship (SOUL) Permanency option, which addresses the critical needs of the aging-out youth population in our community. As a multidisciplinary team, our panel has observed the challenges faced by young individuals who age out of the foster care system and transition into adulthood without a stable support system.

Aging out of the foster care system is a vulnerable time for young people, and without adequate support, they often face difficulties in securing stable housing, education, employment, and healthcare. SOUL recognizes the unique needs of this population and aims to provide essential support to ensure a smoother transition to independence.

Key provisions of the SOUL Permanency option that we find particularly commendable include:

- **Support Services:** SOUL acknowledges that transitioning to adulthood is not a one-size-fits-all process and that many young people need continued guidance and assistance. SOUL family supports financial support, tuition assistance, health care, and other expenses comparable to other permanency options. SOUL family also recognizes the need for aftercare support if relationships with their SOUL legal adult caregiver need to be modified, allowing the young person the option to petition for mediation or modify the arrangement.
- **Youth Voice Lead:** Kansas youth advocated and led the SOUL family option. They have raised their voice for an alternative permanency option addressing the need for prosocial

bonds to increase the overall well-being after foster care. We know without these prosocial bonds, young people are more likely to be unprepared for adulthood and increase isolation and delinquent behaviors.

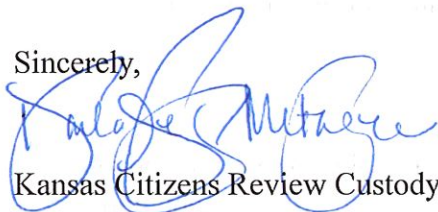
- **Community-Based Services:** SOUL recognizes the importance of community-based services that foster success for young people beyond foster care. Ensuring they have the tools they need to build successful futures, heal from trauma, and thrive in a new family as they prepare for adulthood.

We collectively believe that by supporting the SOUL Family Permanency option, we are investing in the future success of our community and ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to reach their full potential. This legislation's thoughtful and comprehensive approach aligns with our shared belief that every individual deserves a chance at a bright and fulfilling future.

We respectfully urge you to consider supporting the SOUL Family Permanency option and work towards its passage. Your advocacy for this crucial legislation will significantly impact the lives of aging-out youth in our community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing about your continued efforts to support the well-being and success of our young citizens.

Sincerely,



Kansas Citizens Review Custody to Transition Panel

Chairperson (Darla-Nelson Metzger)