DCF Legislative Testimony

January 21, 2026

TESTIMONY OF: Ashley Johson, Director of Safety & Thriving Families, Performance Improvement, Learning & Development, & Wellness, Department for Children and Families

TESTIMONY ON: Proponent, HB2243 — Requiring the secretary for children and families to enter into a memorandum of understanding with military installations to refer children in need of care cases involving children of military personnel to a military family advocacy program.

DCF | HB2243 | PROPONENT

Chair Humphries and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2243 — requiring the secretary for children and families to enter a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with military installations to refer to family advocacy programs when a child subject to a DCF investigation has a parent or legal guardian serving in the military.

The bill as written mandates the current practice of the agency. DCF enters into Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with military installations under control of the Department of Defense, located in Kansas, to connect families with the appropriate and available resources, share information regarding investigations and any potential Child in Need of Care filings with family advocacy programs, and address confidentiality needs of both the State and the Military.

The agency has existing or pending Memorandums of Understanding or Agreement with United States Army Garrison (USAG), Fort Riley, McConnell Air Force Base (MAFB), and USAG, Fort Leavenworth, including Munson Army Health Center. These agreements have defined expiration or review terms to ensure they are kept up to date.

Currently, DCF does not ask reporters to identify if the parents listed in the report have military affiliation. When a report is received through the Protection Report Center a reporter may provide this information, or a family may indicate military affiliation during an investigation. When this identification occurs, the agency defers to the processes outlined in the MOU or MOA with parent or legal guardian's affiliated military installation.

Current practice could be easily modified to incorporate the bill's requirements by adding standardized questions during Protection Reporting Center (PRC) intake and the web-based intake system to identify military affiliation and installation location, ensuring that information is documented and transmitted to investigative staff.

Within the current draft additional clarity could be provided to the agency by providing a definition of military installation. This term is federally defined at 10 USC § 2801(c)(4) as "…a base, camp, post, yard, center, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of a military department or, in the case of an activity in a foreign country under the operational control of the Secretary of a military department or the Secretary of Defense, without regard to the duration of operational control." Alternatively, military installation is defined at KSA 48-3802 as "…any land, buildings, or other structures owned or controlled by a division of the United States department of defense, Kansas national guard or any other federal or state agency that is critical to the safety and security of Kansas or the United States." **For DCF to comply with the statutory requirement, it will be important to know how military installation is defined for the purposes of this act.**

To ensure equitable treatment of members of the military under this bill, **DCF requests that in line 10 the word preliminary be struck so that referrals to family advocacy programs for military members are only mandated when an investigation is opened.** Preliminary inquiry occurs prior to a concern being assigned for further assessment and the preliminary inquiry may lead to no further assessment of the family. To refer cases to family advocacy programs during preliminary inquiry would lead to disclosure that a military family was subject to a PRC report where no further assessment is warranted when other Kansas families would be unaware that a report was received.

To support the ability to enter memorandums of understanding with the military installations, DCF would request that at line 17 the words "a military family advocacy program at" be struck. MOUs and MOAs are typically entered into with the military leadership of the installation (either Commanders or Garrison Commander under current agreements) rather than with the family advocacy program itself.

In existing MOUs and MOAs military installations and their commanding officers have varied descriptions of military family advocacy programs and DCF would look to our partners at the Department of Defense to verify the language in New Section 1(d) accurately reflects their understanding of a military family advocacy program.

The bill has no fiscal impact on the agency as written.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony.

DCF supports the legislation with the proposed change and would ask that the committee to pass HB2243.