



Proponent Testimony on HB2034 – Written Only
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
March 8, 2023

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Erickson, Ranking Member Pettey, and Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Marsh, CEO of the Children's Alliance of Kansas. The Alliance is an association of 19 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 HB2034.

As child welfare providers, we serve children and families after allegations of abuse or neglect are reported to DCF or law enforcement. In some instances, especially involving young children who are not yet fully verbal and are the most vulnerable to caregiver abuse and neglect, investigations require DCF seek the consultation of medical professionals. The signs and indicators of severe child physical abuse, medical abuse, chronic neglect, or even child torture, are not always readily apparent – even to medical care providers. In child welfare, there is the risk of a false positive – determining a child has been abused when he has not – and a false negative – determining a child has not been abused when he has. Avoiding either of these errors is critically important to the wellbeing of children and their families. HB2034 would increase the capacity of our medical provider community to refer, assess, identify, and intervene appropriately in situations of child maltreatment or neglect.

An important principle of child welfare practice is to avoid subjecting any child alleged to have been abused to multiple interviews and multiple exams, both for protection of the child's mental health and for the protection of any law enforcement investigation. We are optimistic that DCF, law enforcement, Children's Advocacy Centers, and the CARE providers will develop clear guidance as to how the CARE network would interact with the Children's Advocacy Center processes in instances of child sexual abuse allegations.

We support building a stronger network of medical providers and ensuring young children can be assessed for child maltreatment and neglect when recommended by a trained physician. We ask for your support of HB2034.

Rachel Marsh
rmarsh@childdally.org
(620) 951 4110

Members of the Children's Alliance of Kansas:

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

KVC Kansas, Olathe
KidsTLC, Olathe
Restoration Family Services, Wichita
Saint Francis Ministries, Salina
TFI Family Services, Topeka
O'Connell Children's Shelter, Lawrence
The Villages, Topeka
Wichita Children's Home, Wichita
Zoe's House, Kansas City