

Proponent Testimony on HB 2329  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
January 22, 2026

Chair Warren, Vice Chair Titus, Ranking Member Corson, and Members of the Committee, my name is Steve Solomon, Director of Public Policy for TFI Family Services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2329. TFI is a private, not-for-profit agency providing a wide range of child welfare and behavioral health services throughout Kansas. Our mission is Devoted to the Strength of Family. TFI 's current services include early intervention to maintain and strengthen families, foster care in both family and residential settings, adoption support, independent living services, aftercare, and case management services for children and families in the child welfare system. In addition, our full range of behavioral health services include outpatient treatment and residential services via our Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) and Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).

After juvenile justice reform (SB 367) passed in Kansas—when KDOC foster care services and residential services began to be phased out—we began to experience a marked increase in out-of-placement referrals for youth with more severe criminogenic histories and behaviors. The same experience has been observed by the other Case Management Contractors over the years and has led to concerns about unanticipated consequences due to several elements of juvenile justice reform.

We have observed youth being referred to the Case Management contractors because of criminogenic behaviors and the inability of parents to manage their children's behavior or who in some cases express fear for their own safety in their homes. Some have expressed concern about safety in the community because of their child's behavior as well. The child welfare system responsibility is to serve children who demonstrate abuse and/or neglect by their parents and to assist families in making changes which would allow the child to return to their home.

Youth demonstrating criminological behavior in the community and/or home will exhibit similar patterns when they enter the child welfare system. Many of these youth have the potential to adjust to the environment of the foster care system, but there is significant impact on the milieu that is detrimental to the other children and youth. More importantly, many of these youth will remain in the system much longer than others and create an environment that can be dangerous and at least intimidating and destructive for both them and the other children and staff.

Concerns have been expressed about HB 2329 based on research findings in the field of correctional services for youth. Broadly speaking it is concluded that in general youth who have experienced some period in formal Juvenile Detention tend to present an array of problematic behaviors and experiences as they grow up and in adulthood. These findings support the conclusion that detention should be considered as a last resort and certainly reflect “common sense” and reasonable beliefs about the impact of such experience on youth as they grow.

One of the factors that presents challenges for research in this area is that all youth entering detention represent a subgroup of youth: youth whose behavior has led to the determination that detention is the only viable option for them given some sort of problematic behavior. This shared experience places these youth in a cohort of at-risk youth before they enter detention, It may be that positive development into adulthood has been affected by pre-detention experiences and patterns of behavior that had been observed then.

Whatever the existing research tells us, the role of detention and the need for assuring appropriate care for youth placed in detention is essential for the development of relevant and effective care for youth placed there.

Youth who enter foster care with aggressive, sexualized, and other harmful dysfunctional traits impact on those who operate within the foster care network of services. Primary concern needs to be focused on the impact on youth who have been placed in the foster care system because of the abusive and/or neglectful behavior of their parents. While some of these children may exhibit some challenging behavioral issues like those found in juvenile offenders, these qualities do not arise to the same level characteristic of those youth who are better served in the juvenile justice system.

We believe the safety and healing environment we wish for children we serve in foster care is undermined by this mix with youth best served in the juvenile justice system. These youth also deserve the range of services—including the development of behavior management skills-- and oversight needed to properly care for them; HB2329 will help accomplish this as well.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share our considerations for supporting HB2329.

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