



**Written Neutral Testimony to Senate Committee on Judiciary  
House Bill 2329: Increasing the Cumulative Detention Limit for Juvenile Offenders,  
Providing for Increased Placements of Offenders in Non-Foster Home Beds  
January 22, 2026**

Chair Warren, Vice Chair Titus, Ranking Minority Member Corson, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as the Child Advocate with the Office of the Child Advocate as a neutral on House Bill 2329 increasing the cumulative detention limit for juvenile offenders and providing for increased placements of offenders in non-foster beds in youth residential facilities, and requiring the secretary of corrections to pay for the costs associated with such placements.

The purpose of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is to act as a neutral, independent agency to ensure that children and families receive adequate coordination of child welfare services for child protection and care through services offered by the Department for Children and Families or the department's contracting entities, the Department for Aging and Disability Services, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and Environment and juvenile courts. OCA receives and responds to complaints regarding state agencies, service providers, and juvenile courts that adversely affect the health, safety, and wellbeing of children. Through case and systemic recommendations, OCA seeks impact for best practices, policies, and law.

The 2025 OCA Annual Report contained a narrative titled "The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice" based on concerns received from foster care case management providers, foster home placements, law enforcement, and other community stakeholders about the current landscape for young people exhibiting criminogenic behaviors. OCA has received a range of concerns regarding services and options for youth caught in this intersection; however, many concerns relate to placement options when returning such youth to a caregiver or guardian is not a safe option.

OCA applauds stakeholder investment and the Legislature's continued commitment to refining the juvenile justice reforms initiated in 2016. While OCA recognizes much of the intent behind current proposals such as HB 2329, the agency is concerned that reforms inadvertently create a legal "gap" in which high-risk youth effectively become invisible to the juvenile justice system. These invisible youth often miss opportunities for early intervention and find themselves in a child welfare system that is not prepared to meet their specific needs.

OCA strongly supports efforts to protect and preserve the Juvenile Alternatives Detention Fund from being usurped for other purposes, especially when there is a clear need to increase the community-based capacity and service array to meet the needs of young people and their

families. OCA encourages efforts to improve access to early intervention services. However, OCA also recognizes the immediate need for specialized placement options that have juvenile justice-based training and expertise, including financial support. OCA believes that is the intention behind the provision in HB 2329 that would increase placement of offenders in non-foster home beds in youth residential facilities and allow the Secretary of Corrections to support such placements through the evidence-based programs account.

Ultimately, young people and their caregivers deserve better, ensuring the placement and services are tailored to meet their needs. To ensure HB 2329 achieves its goals of supporting youth without further destabilizing the foster care system, OCA recommends the following:

- **Standardize Response Protocols:** Law enforcement, juvenile intake, foster parents, and child welfare providers require specialized training and clear protocols to follow for handling criminogenic behaviors. Youth must be brought before the juvenile justice system to ensure they are “seen,” their cases are handled as intended by the 2016 reforms, and their numbers are accurately measured by the system. This formalization is not about criminalization, but about accurate data measurement and ensuring that alternate sentences, including access to services, are applied appropriately and are tracked and supported by appropriate resources.
- **Unlock Interagency Coordination:** Formal system entry is the necessary “key” to trigger the level of coordination between the Department of Corrections and the Department for Children and Families required to manage high-risk cases effectively.
- **Establish Collaborative Training:** KDOC should explicitly partner with DCF to develop specialized training and support for child welfare providers. Sharing KDOC’s expertise ensures that providers are not left to “figure things out” on their own but are instead set up for success.
- **Expand Reporting Requirements:** Require assessment and reporting on “diverted” costs. By measuring the expenses shifted onto the child welfare system, the state can accurately address the financial needs of the “gap” population.
- **Authorize Reinvestment Funding:** The Legislature should consider granting the Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee authority to use the Juvenile Alternatives to Detention Fund to cover costs for services for youth who have been diverted into child welfare placements with intentional safeguards in place, ensuring the funds are predominantly utilized and applied for their original purpose as established.

OCA appreciates your time and attention in recognizing the importance of safe, stable appropriate placement and access to evidence-based services for young people that are system involved, be it the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, or both.

I am pleased to respond to questions at the appropriate time.

Kerrie Lonard, JD, MSW  
Child Advocate  
[kerrie.lonard@ks.gov](mailto:kerrie.lonard@ks.gov)  
(785) 296-5470