



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2329

To: The Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Tyler Williams

Date: January 22nd, 2026

Subject: Defending SB 367, Fiscal Responsibility, and Kansas Families

My name is Tyler. I am a formerly adjudicated youth, and I stand before you today to urge you to protect the common-sense, fiscally responsible reforms enacted by this body in 2016. I am here to speak in strong opposition to House Bill 2329.

The late Representative Russ Jennings was a man of principle. He believed that the government should be a steward of taxpayer dollars and that the state is a poor substitute for a family. He built Senate Bill 367 to stop the wasteful "warehousing" of youth in expensive, ineffective facilities. HB 2329 threatens to undo that legacy of fiscal discipline.

The Danger of Vague Criteria: Government Overreach into the Home

HB 2329 seeks to expand the use of group homes by allowing the Secretary of Corrections to contract for beds without clear, objective eligibility criteria.

The Income Gap: When criteria are vague, the system defaults to "managing" families who lack the financial resources to fight back. We risk returning to a two-tiered system of justice: one for families who can afford private treatment and legal counsel, and another for low-income families where the state decides the only solution is to remove the child.

Replacing Parents with Bureaucracy: Without strict standards, we are making it easier for the state to take over the role of the parent. As a conservative state, we should believe that the best place for a child is in a home, not an institution. Expanding out-of-home placement for "moderate-risk" youth is an expansion of government power that undermines the nuclear family.

Protecting the "Crossover" Youth : We must also consider our foster care system. We have a crisis where youth in foster care—children who have committed no crime but are simply victims of circumstance—are being pushed into the juvenile justice system because the state has run out of beds.

The Dumping Ground Effect: If we pass HB 2329 with vague criteria, these group homes will become an "overflow" for the foster care system. This isn't justice; it's a shell game with human lives.



A Bad Deal for Taxpayers: It costs the state exponentially more to house a child in a Youth Residential Center than it does to provide evidence-based support to a family at home. We should not be using juvenile justice funds to patch holes in the child welfare budget.

Defending the "Lockbox" (The EBPA Account): Representative Jennings fought to ensure that savings from reduced incarceration were "locked" in the Evidence-Based Programs Account (EBPA). This money was intended to fund programs that work—programs that keep kids in school and on the right track.

HB 2329 proposes to raid this account to pay for more beds and more bureaucracy. You cannot fund a long-term solution by robbing the very account meant to prevent the problem. That is not sound fiscal policy; it is a step backward into a broken, expensive system.

Conclusion

I am the evidence that SB 367 works. I am here because the State of Kansas chose to invest in a path forward rather than just paying for a bed to keep me out of sight.

I urge you to honor the data that shows community-based rehabilitation reduces recidivism and saves money. Honor the work of Russ Jennings, who proved that we could be "tough on crime" while being "smart on taxpayers."

Please, vote No on House Bill 2329.