



House Education

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SB 384

Presented by:

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Testimony of:

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Chair Huebert, Vice-Chair Dietrich, and Ranking Member Clayton, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony in favor of Senate Bill 384.

Ensuring educational stability for children in foster care is a high priority for DCF, as reflected in practice, policy, and implementation of applicable law. It is in the best interest of a child to be placed with a relative or in a foster home which will maintain the child in the same school the child has been attending whenever possible.

DCF sends KSDE a data file containing the information of every child of school age in DCF custody on a daily basis. KSDE has indicated they have the capacity to provide the outcome data as proposed in SB 384 as long as DCF provides them the list of foster youth from a given year.

DCF initiated a workgroup focused on education stability for children in foster care in 2016. Members include representatives from DCF, DCF grantees, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB). The workgroup meets bi-monthly to discuss education issues in foster care and to collaborate on proposed solutions. Additionally, the workgroup provides a networking infrastructure for members to address issues which present between the regular workgroup meetings.

DCF is supportive of providing as much education outcome data as possible. We will use the data provided as a result of SB 384 to improve DCF policy and practices to achieve better educational outcomes for our foster youth. Additionally, providing this data publicly will ensure transparency and promote accountability for the education of foster youth.

DCF requests that should the committee work SB 384 it consider amending in a provision to include the number and percentage of foster youth participating in the Mental Health Intervention Team Pilot Program or similar mental health program as one of the data points included in the annual report card. We believe this data will provide useful insights about the mental health services available to foster youth in schools and will also use it to improve policy and practices to achieve better outcomes for foster youth. We are happy to work with committee members and/or the Revisors on language.

DCF appreciates the interest of this Committee in supporting educational stability for children in foster care. It is an outcome DCF works continuously to support and improve. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent for SB 384. I'm happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.