



**Proponent Testimony on HB2340
House Health and Human Services
February 13, 2023**

Chair Landwehr, Vice Chair Eplee, Ranking Member Ruiz, and Members of the Committee, my name is Kylee Childs, MSW Practicum Student at 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 testify in support of HB2340 with recommendations.

Kansas continues to face a significant shortage of behavioral health professionals. This has resulted in lack of staff at psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs), which reduces operational capacity and increases waitlists for foster youth. The lack of professionals further creates gaps in services for children and families as our community partners face the same workforce challenges. These shortages contribute to high caseloads, reduced client treatment contact, and high turnover for therapists, regardless of where they are employed. Kansas's chronic behavioral health workforce shortage negatively impacts children and families in the child welfare system.

HB2340 proposes a "Board Approved Supervisor" mandate, which we have concerns about for the following reasons:

1. Adding additional stress to an already overwhelmed workforce
2. Limiting supervision opportunities, particularly in rural areas
3. Delaying time to licensure and entry into the workforce

Many social workers and helping professionals already face secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue. We fear that "one more thing" to make it difficult to obtain clinical licensure or provide clinical supervision will be a deterrent to expanding Kansas's workforce of clinical social workers, resulting in further gaps of service and care for children and families. We respectfully request the committee consider removing the barrier of "Board Approved Supervisor" in HB2340.

HB2340 proposes a change in reciprocity standards by decreasing clinical practice experience requirements to 12 months for Addictions Counselors and Psychologists. All other clinical professionals require at least 3 years of clinical practice before being eligible for licensure, further impeding the opportunity to hire essential staff. We support this reduction being expanded to all licensed clinical staff to enhance workforce recruitment efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of HB2340 as an important step to addressing the shortage of behavioral health professionals in Kansas. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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