



Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

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HB 2103

Presented by:

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Testimony of:

Rebekah Gaston, Director of Policy and Economic & Employment Services
Kansas Department for Children and Families

Testimony on:

HB 2103

Chair Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Kansas Department for Children and Families in support of HB 2103.

The Family First Prevention Services Act is best known for its investment in prevention services, allowing states to use Title IV-E funding for time-limited prevention services for children at risk of being placed into foster care, for the children's parents and kinship caregivers, and pregnant and parenting youth. Under Part I of Family First, DCF can receive federal reimbursements for eligible prevention services, specifically mental health services, substance abuse prevention services and in-home parenting skills. Beginning October 1, 2019, such prevention services can be provided for a child and the child's family for a period of up to 12 months. Prior to passage of FFPSA, Title IV-E funding could only be used for children and their families after the children were in the foster care system.

A less-known section of FFPSA places certain requirements on congregate placements in order to limit their use and encourage children's placements in family foster homes whenever possible. FFPSA provides that children who need special services and treatment in a facility setting can be placed in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) for a certain duration required for such services and treatment to be provided. There are multiple requirements for QRTPs in FFPSA, and child welfare agencies must comply with all QRTP requirements to receive federal funding reimbursement.

Because the technical requirements for QRTPs are very specific, a joint committee composed of members of the Kansas Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning and the Judicial Council Juvenile Offender/Child in Need of Care Code Advisory Committee studied the provisions of FFPSA to determine whether revisions to the Kansas Code for Care of Children were needed for implementation and compliance. The joint committee recommended the changes proposed in HB 2103 to ensure that CINC judges across the state are equipped to make the findings required by federal law for QRTP placements.

This bill would amend the Child in Need of Care code to define QRTP and would codify specific findings the court must make to approve QRTP placements. HB 2103

also requires that a copy of any prevention plan that has been prepared for a child be attached a child in need of care petition if the child's case is referred to court.

FFPSA is important legislation for child welfare that expands eligibility for IV-E funding from being solely focused on foster care to needed evidenced-based services for prevention to help reduce the number of children entering the foster care system. HB 2103 will ensure Kansas complies with federal law related to QRTPs. While there are many other provisions in FFPSA, their implementation can be facilitated through administrative changes policy, programs and processes.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. I am glad to answer any questions from the committee.