

# DCF LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



*February 15, 2023*

**TESTIMONY OF**

Secretary Laura Howard

Kansas Department for Children and Families

**TESTIMONY ON**

House Bill 2361

**Chair**

Representative Concannon

**Vice Chair**

Representative Johnson

**Ranking Minority**

Representative Ousley

**and**

**Members of the Committee**

## SUMMARY OF ISSUE & DCF POSITION

Chairwoman Concannon and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present neutral testimony on House Bill 2361. This bill would require the court limit preference given to close relatives during adoption proceedings if the child has been in the custody of the Secretary for one cumulative year or more.

During the 2022 Session, the House Committee on Children and Seniors requested a Judicial Council review on ‘attachment in child placement decisions and adoption proceedings made in CINC cases.’ The Judicial Council Juvenile Offender / Child in Need of Care Advisory Committee was made up of both legal and child welfare professionals who reported out on ‘the consideration of attachment when selecting an adoptive resource for a child in the CINC system’ was released in December of 2022 after completing an ‘in-depth study’ of the current process from time parental rights were terminated or relinquished up to Adoptive parent selections.

The committee recommended amending K.S.A 38-2270 to make clear the best interest of the child standard applies when DCF selects adoptive parents for a child, and to create statutory right for certain foster parents to be considered as prospective adoptive parents in the Best Interest Staffing process.

While the Judicial Council Recommendations do not directly address all potential outcomes in a CINC proceeding, their proposed language requires parties to thoroughly consider the Best Interest of the Child, to include attachment, when making permanency decisions. DCF considers the Judicial Council JO/CINC Committee recommendations an effective path forward and would ask the committee to consider their proposed amendments.