

State of Kansas

Senate Chamber

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House Committee on Children and Seniors,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for SB 162. Since I began serving in the Kansas Senate, I have been inundated with phone calls, emails and letters expressing concerns about our Foster Care program and how it is supervised by the state.

When I served on the interim Foster Care Committee two years ago, it became quite clear that one of the challenges the legislature faces is having factual information about where Foster children are and aren't spending the night while under the custody of the state. Additionally, the scope of how many Foster children are missing and the regional locations of their out-of-home placements is not readily available.

I believe the recent news headlines below highlight the gaps in information getting to the public – getting to us – with regard to our Foster Care children:

- ***18 of KS foster children found last week; 58 still missing – 11/20/18***
- ***Some Kansas foster kids still missing, some sleep in offices – 4/21/18***
- ***Lawmakers 'flabbergasted' that 74 foster children are missing – 10/10/17***

I believe SB 162 is the vehicle for needed additional transparency in the state of Kansas. The passage of SB 162 would assure the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch and the general public receive timely information about delays in out-of-home placement, for whatever reason, and children that have left their out-of-home placement.

For us to make appropriate legislative decisions that might further help what I believe are vulnerable children in Kansas, we must take steps to change the culture of withholding vital information. I firmly believe the sharing of information would serve to help lift the shadow of doubt that continues to shroud our Foster Care program.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Molly Baumgardner