



TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 2103

March 18, 2019

Chairman Gene Suellentrop and Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents over 90% of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 2103 regarding the Family First Preventative Services Act funding.

In 2017, there were a total of 7,933 children in foster care in Kansas. Nearly half of the approximately 4,000 Kansas children who entered foster care that year did so in part as a result of parental substance abuse.

Many times, children at-risk of entering foster care could stay safely with their family with appropriate services, interventions, and oversight to ensure the child's safety. Evidence supports this approach, which helps families heal while preventing the additional trauma of unnecessary entry to foster care. Existing policy does not support access to these services before children enter foster care, contributing to the current crisis. The Family First Preventative Services Act is a new federal law that offers funding and flexibility to our state to update its approach.

Starting in October of this year, the law will allow states to use federal funds previously limited to foster care placements for evidence-based services for children and their caregivers that can prevent the need for foster care, including mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and parenting skills training.

KAAP and the American Academy of Pediatrics support *Family First* because it aligns policy with the evidence of what we know works. It is important that House Bill 2103 get passed so that our state can take advantage of this federal funding.

Thank you for your time and attention. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on all pediatric issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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