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**Proponent Testimony on HB2536
House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care
January 24, 2024 @ 1:30p**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the Committee, my name is Kristalle Hedrick, Vice President of Kansas Programs with FosterAdopt Connect. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2536.

FosterAdopt Connect is an agency rooted in advocacy, we actively monitor the changing needs of children and youth impacted by foster care to identify gaps in policy, practice, and service provision. It has been an honor and privilege to walk alongside the Annie E. Casey Foundation, young leaders with lived experience, and other child welfare leaders across the state as we begin to expand our knowledge and best practice related to young adults leaving our foster care system in Kansas.

While developed with the best of intention, our current practice and legal permanency options often fall short in ensuring young adults leave foster care with a caring, permanent family, safe and stable housing, and a path towards economic stability and ongoing education. HB 2536 offers the Support, Opportunity, Unity and Legal relationships all young people need and will continue to need throughout their lifetime.

Last year this committee led the way in the successful passage of HB 2194, the Representative Gail Finney Memorial Foster Care Bill of Rights. In congruence, HB 2536 the SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option also raises up our youth's voices in their own journey towards safety and well-being and offers additional resources to those transitioning into adulthood.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB2536. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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