



## **Testimony on DD Waiver**

### **House Children's Issues Committee**

**January 27, 2011**

The Children's Alliance is dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and well being of children in our state. Our alliance of child welfare providers care for Kansas children and families in a variety of ways, including; family preservation, kinship care, foster care, adoption, residential services, and independent living. The goal for any child in out of home care in Kansas is to be reintegrated with family as quickly as possible or be placed in a family that can provide the child permanence. In order for this to happen, it is critical that appropriate services be available to all children.

Our organizations understand how important it is that a system of services be available for vulnerable children regardless of their needs. We also understand how important it is that collateral systems that offer these services be seamless in meeting the needs of these children. Many of the children our members serve face the same challenges.

We recognize that this is not the first difficult budget year Kansans have faced. Last year, foster care contracts were decreased by \$14 million and collectively nearly \$1 billion has been cut from the budget. This year the combined cuts in mental health total an additional \$15 million. All of these services are part of the critical infrastructure serving Kansans who have special needs. While it is easy for us to support the need for services for children with developmental challenges, we appreciate the difficulty that policymakers face in trying to fund these services.

As the Interim Children's Issues Committee heard, thousands of children are waiting for disability and autism services. Access to these services, like children's mental health services and child welfare services, often make a dramatic difference in a child's quality of life, development and family stability. The Children's Alliance has long advocated for a fully funded system of services for Kansas' children and families, wherein mental health needs, developmental supports, family supports and comprehensive health care is available to children and families needing these services.

Bruce Linhos  
Executive Director

HOUSE CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES  
DATE: JANUARY 27, 2011  
ATTACHMENT NO.3