



**Saint Francis  
Community Services®**

*Serving Children and Families Since 1945*

2015 Special Committee on Foster Care Adequacy  
November 17, 2015  
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Senator Forrest Knox, Chair

Dear Senator Knox,

Letter to the Chair of the Legislative Interim Committee

Chairman Knox and members of the Special Committee on Foster Care Adequacy,

As the President and CEO of Saint Francis Community Services we extend our sincere thanks for your continued interest and ongoing efforts in understanding and improving the foster care system in Kansas. As an organization providing services to children and families for over 70 years, ensuring a safe environment and quality services to children and families, when a child must reside out of home, is of utmost importance to us. We share in your commitment to look at ways we keep children safe and in a permanent family.

The State of Kansas and Saint Francis have a special partnership. It is special, not because of the partners themselves, but because of the children that are served by the partnership. As you know our organization has partnered with the state of Kansas for the provision of a continuum of out of home services. This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year that the state has allowed community based partners to provide direct services. Over that period of time we have seen a dramatic shift to seeing positive outcomes on a variety of criteria and variables. Saint Francis has been recognized for its contribution as a foster care and child welfare system provider nationally, and we are committed to continuing our standards of care with our Kansas partners in the foster care system.

Like DCF and other services providers, we share common challenges relative to the increase of children coming into our system of care, while at the same time, the number of foster homes has not grown. A shortage of foster parents, especially in the western part of the state where we provide services, is something that we cannot tackle alone. Even so, at this juncture we still are meeting the positive outcomes set by the state. Continued improvement in the system will require the ongoing partnership amongst the Kansas Legislature, DCF, and the foster care contractors.

We commend the committee for gathering the individuals and organizations here today. There is value in taking a look at our system from many perspectives. Most encouraging are the individuals from the front line of the foster care system appearing before your committee. Those that are providing the care in their homes can provide valuable insight and we must be mindful that insuring their success for the benefit of Kansas children is a collective responsibility we all share.

During the course of the day we will have two representatives in the audience to field questions and provide insights as requested - Cory Rathbun, Vice President of Foster Care Reintegration, and Rachel Marsh, child welfare attorney for the agency. Again, they will make sure we listen to the suggestions and invite support from the people testifying about the foster care system.

In closing, I wish to thank the Chairman and committee for their continued support of the foster care system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "The Rev. Robert Nelson Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Very Rev. Robert Nelson Smith  
Dean, President and CEO