



To the Kansas House Committee on Children and Seniors:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope coalition in **support of House Bill 2751**.

Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope is a coalition of youth, families, and independent advocacy organizations who came together to speak up about our state's current foster care crisis in order to help rebuild the promise that every kid has a safe home, a healthy family, and a bright future. More information about our coalition is available online at www.RebuildHopeKansas.org.

Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope supports the creation of the Office of the Child Advocate for Children's Protection and Services. Kansas is one of a minority of states that does not currently have a Children's Ombudsman Office / Office of the Child Advocate, according to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL).¹

The model proposed in HB 2751 — an office established by the legislature to exist outside of the pertinent state agencies — offers the highest level of independence among the models outlined by NCSL. We support having an independent entity whose budget and staffing are not dependent on the agencies whose work may be the subject of the child advocate's reviews.

Along with increased resources for at-risk families and youth with acute needs, structural improvements like those in HB 2751 are important components of comprehensive reforms to ensure our child welfare system works as effectively as possible.

Sincerely,

The Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope Steering Committee

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices.aspx>