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February 14, 2017

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Children's Alliance of Kansas
House Bill 2139
House Health and Human Services Committee

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony expressing support for House Bill 2139. The Children's Alliance is the only association in Kansas representing private, non-profit, child welfare agencies across the state. Our 19 member agencies came together to support adding a new provider to the dental team to create jobs, improve Kansans' health and save money.

The health and dental care needs of children in child welfare are vast and often compounded by their circumstances.

With record numbers of children in foster care, meeting the oral health needs of this population is a challenge. There are a number of issues unique to involvement in foster care that make accessing care difficult, including frequent changes in placement and caregivers and multi-system involvement of children. Adding a dental therapist to the team provides a new opportunity to overcome barriers faced by children in foster care in accessing dental care.

Dental therapists will make it more cost-effective for private dental practices to serve children in foster care.

Under federal statute, children receiving Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance are categorically eligible for Medicaid, insurance known as KanCare in Kansas. Currently, children in foster care are less likely to receive routine oral health care because of the difficulty of finding providers who serve patients with KanCare insurance. By making it more cost-effective for private dental practices to accept KanCare, more children in foster care will have access to the care they need.

Dental therapists will help more children in foster care receive care, avoid costly emergencies and prevent serious illness.

Dental therapists will expand access to and improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care for children in foster care. This will save the state money in the long run by avoiding costly emergencies and preventing serious illness. Dental therapists offer the promise of improved well-being and health outcomes for children in foster care – all without spending any tax dollars.

Thank you Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.