

Testimony to House Children & Seniors Committee
February 5, 2019
Support for HB2103, Requirements for placement in a QRTP

My name is Rachel Marsh, Vice President of Advocacy with Saint Francis Ministries. Rooted in the Episcopal tradition, Saint Francis is an **independent not-for-profit** that has served Kansas children and families since our beginnings as a Boys Home in Ellsworth, Kansas, in 1945. Today in Kansas, Saint Francis provides child welfare case management services across 75 counties, sponsors over 600 foster care homes, directs 5 youth residential programs, and serves children and parents with innovative and evidence-based mental health and substance use treatment services. Saint Francis employs 1,100 dedicated social workers, therapists and other staff members across 76 counties in Kansas. The mission of Saint Francis today includes a multi-faceted child and family services ministry in six states and around the globe.

Saint Francis believes public policy advocacy for strong child welfare systems is critical to advancing our mission of providing healing and hope to children and families. As part of our public policy focus, Saint Francis has undertaken a national **policy advocacy initiative around the Family First Prevention Services Act** (Family First Act). Saint Francis leaders have had the opportunity to consult with child welfare advocates, policy analysts, lawyers, and providers around the country who are working to support implementation of the Family First Act in multiple states.

I was privileged to bring this multi-state perspective as a member of the Supreme Court Permanency Planning Task Force subcommittee and as a member of the Child in Need of Care and Juvenile Offender Advisory Committee to the Judicial Council to support in drafting and reviewing HB2103. During the same time frame, I served as the Saint Francis representative on **the Child Welfare Systems Task Force**. That Task Force **recommended implementation of the new prevention funding opportunities under the Family First Act**. Saint Francis supports this priority recommendation and implementation of Family First prevention funding opportunities.

To qualify for new prevention funding opportunities the Task Force recommended, Kansas must comply with **new federal limitations around funding for placement of foster children in certain residential/group settings** (qualified residential treatment programs, or QRTPs). HB2103 reflects thorough and detailed consideration of incorporating the new Family First QRTP standards into the current Kansas Child in Need of Care (CINC) Code framework. HB2103 modifies the Kansas CINC Code to ensure that necessary judicial review will occur in a manner that complies with Family First. By doing so, **HB2103 advances the Child Welfare Systems Task Force recommendation to implement prevention funding opportunities under Family First**.

HB2103 is drafted precisely and effectively to support Kansas compliance with the QRTP provisions under Family First. Saint Francis supports **passing HB2103 as a clean bill**, as a necessary and critical step towards early and robust implementation of the Family First Act. If there are additional policy recommendations related to Family First or the CINC Code, I recommend addressing those in a separate bill.

I am happy to stand for questions.