



Special Committee on Foster
Care Oversight

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Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Baumgardner, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Beverly Mortimer, and I am Senior Vice President of Programming for Jobs for America's Graduates- Kansas (JAG-K). Thank you for asking me to give my perspective on academic programs of youth in foster care. My perspective has evolved through my professional growth during my 33-year career in public education as a classroom teacher, principal, and superintendent of schools. My perspective has become a priority since I began programming work with JAG-K in 2016. The data and trends at the state level should create a sense of urgency to take action to improve educational access and opportunities for youth in foster care.

Information included in this testimony:

- **#1 Number of students in foster care – page 2**
 - Approximately 7,000 Kansas youth in DCF out-of-home care
- **#2 Adults ending DCF custody with completion of 12th grade – page 2**
 - State average is 31% (DCF website)
- **Current data from KSDE – page 3**
 - **#3 KSDE Graduation Rate** – rates for students in foster care 55.8% (87.5% for all students)
 - **#4 KSDE Performance Data** – more students in foster care score in the lowest category; gap increases from elementary to high school (math and ELA state assessments)
- **#5 Sample Student Transcript Review – page 4**
 - Local graduation requirements vary and this the inconsistencies cause additional barriers for students in foster care when they change schools and the requirements change.
 - Students in foster care often lack the KSDE Individual Plan of Study (IPS), which could be used to ensure continuity as the students move from district to district.
 - Kansas State Statute 38-2285 outlines the graduation requirements for students in custody of the Department of Children and Families secretary.
- **#6 National Data & Research – page 5**

#1 KS Department of Children & Families (EOY Average)

Number of DCF Youth DCF Out-of-Home Care						
FY2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
6,257	6,625	6,896	7,371	7,484	7,389	6,806 (Sept.)

#2 Adults Ending Custody with the Secretary will have Completed Grade 12 (DCF)

East Region	FY2017 Totals	FY2018 Totals	FY2019 Totals	FY2020 Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	66	94	48	49
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	91	103	91	132
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	72.5%	91.3%	52.7%	37.1%
Kansas City Region	FY2017 Totals	FY2018 Totals	FY2019 Totals	FY2020 Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	53	92	43	20
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	74	104	77	75
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	71.6%	88.5%	55.8%	26.7%
West Region	FY2017 Totals	FY2018 Totals	FY2019 Totals	FY2020 Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	33	34	21	27
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	121	95	80	115
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	27.3%	35.8%	26.3%	23.5%
Wichita Region	FY2017 Totals	FY2018 Totals	FY2019 Totals	FY2020 Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	36	52	22	30
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	83	96	56	88
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	43.4%	54.2%	39.3%	34.1%
Statewide	FY2017 Totals	FY2018 Totals	FY2019 Totals	FY2020 Totals
# of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade.	188	272	134	126
Total # of Adults ending Custody with Secretary	369	398	304	410
% of Adults ending Custody with Secretary having completed the 12th grade	50.9%	68.3%	44.1%	30.7%

Numerator: The number of adults ending custody with the Secretary of DCF for reason of Emancipation or Runaway, who have completed the 12th grade. **Denominator:** The number of adults ending custody with the Secretary of DCF for reason of Emancipation or Runaway.

#3 – KSDE Graduation Rates

KSDE Graduation Rates				
STATE 2018	FOSTER CARE 2018	STATE 2019	FOSTER CARE 2019	
87.5%	61.3%	87.5%	55.8%	

#4 – KSDE Performance Data

Performance Data – Level 1 of 4 (lowest academic level)

Kansas State Assessments in Math and ELA (English Language Arts) comparison for students in foster care and all students in Kansas.

- Students in foster care score lower than all students in each category at both levels
- Percentage of students in foster care scoring at level 1 has increased in all categories, except grade 3 ELA
- Gap between students in foster care and all students has widened in all categories from 2018 to 2019.
- Gap from grade 3 and HS assessments widens for both math (9.06) and ELA (9.1)
- Subgroup of students in foster care is the highest group “not” tested on Kansas State Assessments at 5.39%. (next highest subgroup is students with disabilities at 2.17%)

Kansas State Department of Education website

KS State Assessments - Level 1		
	2018	2019
Grade 3 Math		
Foster Care	31.46	40.87
All	18.4	18.24
Gap	13.06	22.63
HS Math		
Foster Care	72.11	72.76
All	44.46	41.07
Gap	27.65	31.69
Grade 3 ELA		
Foster Care	47.05	46.86
All	29.59	28.58
Gap	17.46	18.28
HS ELA		
Foster Care	59.64	61.53
All	33.29	34.15
Gap	26.35	27.38

#5 Sample Student Transcript Review

	Freshman	Freshman	Sophomore	Sophomore	Junior	Junior	Senior	Senior	Senior	Senior
Graduation Requirements + electives	HS #1 Sem. 1	HS #2 Sem. 2	HS #2 Sem. 1	HS #2 Sem. 2	HS #3 Sem. 1	HS #4 Sem. 2	HS #4 Quar. 1	HS #4 Quar. 2	HS #4 Quar. 3	HS #4 Quar. 4
English* (4 of 4)	English 1	English 1	English 2 Honors AND Creative Writing AND Speech	English 2 Honors AND Creative Writing (credit given)	English 11 (credit given) AND Dramatic Literature	English 3B	English 3A	English 3B	English 4A	English 4B
Math (3.5 of 3)	Algebra 1 & Algebra 1 Math Lab	Algebra 1	Geometry	Geometry (credit given)	Geometry AND Personal Finance	Alg./Geo 2	Alg./Geo 2	Alg./Geo 2	Alg./Geo 3	Alg./Geo 3
Social Studies (3 of 3)	World History	X	US History	US History	World History	World History	X	X	American Govt.	Economics
Science (5/4 of 3)	Physical Science	Earth/Space Science	Biology 1	Biology 1	Earth/Space	Earth/Space	Physical Science AND Health Science 11A	Physical Science AND Health Science 11B	X	Zoology
PE (3 of 1)	PE	PE	Wt. Training (credit given)	Wt. Training AND Lifetime Sports (credit given)	Strength & Conditioning	X	X	X	X	X
Fine Arts (1)	Women's Ensemble	Women's Ensemble	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Electives/CTE (6.25) (extra science)	Health	Advocacy AND Nutrition AND Principles of Illustration	Advocacy	Advocacy	Seminar					
24.75 of 21	4	4	4	3.5	3.75	0.5	1	1.5	1	1.5

This is an actual transcript for a JAG-K Transitions Student (name and schools removed).
 .5 credit for each course in each box (multiple courses in a subject are in some instances)

Repeated Courses - physical science, Earth/space science, PE courses
 Enrollment dates in new schools uncertain - mid semester?

Each column color indicates a change of school. (4 different high schools)
 JAG-K not listed on transcript (elective)

Green -A/B's Red - F's

#6 National Data

- Each time a student in care changes schools the student loses 4-6 months of academic progress. (American Bar Association & Casey Family Programs; Legal Center for Foster Care and Education 2008)
- Students in foster care score 16–20 percentile points below their peers in state standardized testing. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)
- Only 3 percent of children who have been in foster care attend post-secondary education after high school graduation. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)
- Children do not begin school immediately after entering foster care, often because of missing records and gaps in school attendance. Transition time between placements also creates gaps in school attendance. (National working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008)

Conclusion

State data shows that the systems are failing to produce positive educational outcomes for youth in foster care. Education must be a high priority for youth in foster care. It is imperative that we look at this unique group of students scattered across the state of Kansas and pool our resources and expertise to create a better system.

This is a very complex problem and will require an innovative and collaborative effort to solve. The recent actions to create a report card will provide additional data into outcomes for your youth in foster care. ALL stakeholders must be willing to look in the mirror at current policy and practice AND look out the window in order to create a system that allows youth in foster care the same opportunities to access a high-quality education.

Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas is an evidence-based program that achieves high positive outcomes each year with students facing barriers, including graduation rates above 95% for the past three years. The rate for youth in foster care being served in JAG-K programs from 2014-19 is also 95%. We continue to pilot Transition Services programs (formerly Success Academy) to better understand and meet the needs of youth in foster care. We appreciate DCF's support of this important initiative.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this important topic.

I would now be glad to stand for any questions the Committee may have.