

THE CITY OF  
**SpringHill**  
KANSAS

Madam Chairperson and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Steve Ellis, and I submit testimony today in support of HB 2271 from three different perspectives: as Mayor of the City of Spring Hill advocating for my community's youth; as an attorney who serves minor children as a guardian ad litem in Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases; and, as a parent who has fostered and adopted children from CINC cases.

While it is a goal of the foster care system to help children achieve permanency, some children do not. Many of those children do not request out of the system at age 18 as they are fortunate to be able to remain connected to their foster family, maintaining housing for the child and providing people with whom the child can celebrate holidays and milestones and enjoy the loving comfort of a family. Unfortunately, this is not the experience of all children in foster care.

For some, they may have moved from placement to placement, experienced issues with a placement or experience some behavioral issues brought on by the trauma the child experienced, or simply not be lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to find their new home. These kids experience extended feelings of a lack of control over their own life and a desire to get away from a system that they feels failed them.

These children have varying reasons for leaving the foster care system, including a desire to get away from a system they feel is broken, living in homes where they feel unwelcome, or just simply being tired of moving regularly due to a variety of issues affecting the child's stability. In my experience, these newly minted adults demonstrate an overdeveloped sense of their own ability to care for themselves. While some of these kids continue to reach out to their case managers or guardians ad litem over time these parties cannot offer individually what the system itself can offer.

Children are in CINC cases due to many contributing factors, none of which include the failures of the child. Sadly, this is not a premise that everyone understands because they may hear of a child's behaviors and developed a presumption this is simply "a bad kid" ... we must dispense with this premise and instead remember that children learn how to be adults from the adults in their lives. Offering young people the opportunity to re-enter the system gives them a safety net that sends a clear message that we have not given up on them ...and that they should not give up, either.

I greatly appreciate the Committee having this hearing and am grateful for opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven M. Ellis