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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ADAM THOMAS
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Madame Chair, Members of the Committee,

I come before you today as a strong proponent of HB 2271, and join the others testifying in asking for your support as well.

Shortly after I began my tenure in the legislature, I was approached by Mayor Ellis of Spring Hill about the issue of foster children in this age group. As a father of multiple adopted children and someone very involved in this process, I trusted his experience and told him I would do everything I could do to be impactful in this area.

After many conversations, legal discussions, drafts, and edits, here we are.

The bill before us looks at those foster children who find themselves aging out of the foster care system at 18 and find themselves in need of re-entry based on circumstances that may or may not be caused by their own actions. This bill allows them the chance to re-enter into the foster care system until the age of 21, allowing them guidance, accountability, and the help needed to get them on the right path, and allow them to be a positive and contributing member to society and our state's economy.

I recognize the need to consider the potential fiscal impact, and yes, there will be a dollar amount associated with the implementation of this program. I would ask you to consider the daily cost of incarceration of some of these young people who end up choosing a destructive path and end up on the wrong side of the law. I would also ask you to consider the cost of the daily battles some of these young people would fight with in regard to their mental health as they get out into what we call the real world.

We cannot give up on these folks just because the system tells us at a certain age we must.

I must tell you I was never a foster child and do not have experience in the foster care system which is why I leaned so heavily on the advice and council of Mayor Ellis, my friend Autumn Johnson who is also testifying before you today, and DCF. With that being said, when I was 18, I was enjoying playing first base on a baseball team that went on to win the city championship that year. We were having the time of our lives. When that season ended, guess what? We were aged out and could no longer play. Unless of course we went on to play in college, or by some miracle were able to try out for a major league team. A huge part of my life...done and over just like that. It stung me knowing that chapter of my life was over.

Good news though as tough as that was for me, I had a support system and was able to find a new path with the guidance and advice of my parents. Without them who knows where I would have ended up. Consider that story and consider how that story could end without the help, love, and support system I had. I was lucky.

We cannot give up on these young people.

I want to thank DCF, Mayor Ellis for all his help in bringing this issue to us, my friend and advocate Autumn for putting the language on paper, and all who were involved in the drafting of such an important piece of legislation including the technical amendments that we must clarify a few terms and clean up a couple parts of the language.

I ask you all to support HB 2271.

Thank you very much madame chair and committee for your time and allowing me to share with you today.

Adam Thomas

Kansas House of Representatives

District 26