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Written Testimony in Support of HB 2589
House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care

Chair Howerton, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of Kansas Appleseed in support of HB 2589. This bill would require reporters of child abuse and neglect to disclose their names, phone numbers, and residential addresses with the receiving agency, while also maintaining an alternative, anonymous reporting method. Secondly, the bill provides safeguards for identifiable information that stipulate when such information can be accessed, transmitted, and by whom.¹

Kansas Appleseed is a statewide leader in researching and advocating for reforms that improve the well-being of Kansas kids and their families, and the foster care system. HB 2589 is a step in the right direction toward protecting families from the unnecessary, and sometimes traumatic experiences of being investigated for child abuse and possible separation.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation found that 93% of reports called into child protection hotlines in 2023 were either screened out with no action or no evidence of maltreatment was found in an investigation—22,000 of such reports were screened in Kansas alone.² In fact, many calls are placed by former partners in the middle of resolving a child custody dispute.³

When caregivers are baselessly investigated for allegations of child maltreatment, the experience can be quite distressing. Investigations can trigger feelings of shock, betrayal, loss of control, confusion, and a sense of oversurveillance in their community. The intensity of these

¹ H.B 2589, 2025 Biennium. 2026 Reg. Sess. (Kansas 2026).

https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/hb2589/

² *Child Maltreatment tTrends*. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2025, December 12).

https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-maltreatment-trends?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=10395659004&gbr aid=0AAAAAD3xzvE1Kp1k0hzQjr75Y7TGEbsqE&gclid=CjwKCAiAs4HMBhBJEiwACrFNZUEQiKvjNENzs pCfRJVtMpxIWgexuHkmne9fpdtWA51TfkFuvM59MRoCs1EQAvD_BwE; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). *Child Maltreatment 2023*. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.

³ Sarkar, S. (2025, December 20). *New York Governor Signs Law to End Anonymous Reporting of Child Maltreatment*. The Imprint: Youth & Family News.

<https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/new-york-governor-signs-law-to-end-anonymous-reporting-of-child-maltreatment/269804>; Loudenback, J. (2023, November 7). *More States Seek To Curb Anonymous CPS Reports Against Parents*. The Imprint: Youth & Family News.

<https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/more-states-seek-to-curb-anonymous-cps-reports-against-parents/245884>

feelings can amplify when a child is separated from their parents, and, potentially, placed into foster care.⁴

False reports that rise to the level of an investigation can have long-term, adverse effects on a family. A study by the National Institutes of Health concludes that over 50% of people who are acquitted of a false allegation develop permanent personality changes, such as anxiety, hypervigilance, and less confidence.⁵ Wrongfully accused individuals may also lose employment, accumulate legal debt, and struggle to regain economic stability.⁶

In addition, research demonstrates that Black children are disproportionately impacted by false reports of child abuse or neglect. This is in part because Black families are more likely to live in poverty than White families, and the conditions of poverty are often conflated with neglect.⁷

Asking reporters to disclose identifiable information, while offering an anonymous method, is an effective, non-threatening measure that can reduce the number of unsubstantiated reports of child abuse and neglect. By slightly raising the stakes of filing a report, the state is calling on reporters to be more certain before potentially involving themselves and the accused with law enforcement and/or child protective services. For these reasons, Kansas Appleseed encourages the committee to adopt HB 2589.

Thank you for your time,

Brenna Visocsky

⁴ *How do helplines support children and families?*. Casey Family Programs. (2025, October 23). <https://www.casey.org/helplines-overview/>; *How do investigation, removal, and placement cause trauma for families?*. Casey Family Programs. (2025b, March 7). <https://www.casey.org/traumatic-impacts/>

⁵ Brooks, S. K., & Greenberg, N. (2021). Psychological impact of being wrongfully accused of criminal offences: A systematic literature review. *Medicine, science, and the law*, 61(1), 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0025802420949069>

⁶ Geffen, B. (2017). THE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF ACQUITTAL: EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF ARRESTS WITHOUT CONVICTIONS . Philadelphia, PA; Penn Carey Law.

⁷ Drake, B., Jones, D., Kim, H., Gyourko, J., Garcia, A., Barth, R. P., ... & Jonson-Reid, M. (2023). Racial/Ethnic Differences in Child Protective Services Reporting, Substantiation and Placement, With Comparison to Non-CPS Risks and Outcomes: 2005–2019. *Child Maltreatment*, 10775595231167320