



March 10, 2026

Brenna Visocsky, Just Campaign Director
Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
bvisocsky@kansasappleseed.org
Proponent Written Testimony on HB 2639
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Chair Warren, Ranking Member Corson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2639. This bill would change the name of juvenile crisis intervention centers to juvenile stabilization centers, modifying the intake criteria and treatment provided at such centers and transferring moneys from the evidence-based programs account of the state general fund for use at such centers.

Kansas Appleseed has a long history of advocating for the rights and well-being of children, including ending punitive youth justice practices in the state, and ensuring youth have access to the mental and behavioral health services they need. HB 2639 makes significant improvements to youth's access to care by changing juvenile crisis intervention centers into crisis stabilization centers, and modifying intake criteria to allow better access to these services.

Kansas' experience prior to youth justice reform demonstrated that reliance on out-of-home placement and incarceration was both ineffective and unsustainable. At the time, Kansas had the 6th highest youth confinement rates in the country, and research showed that incarcerating youth often increased the likelihood of future system involvement.¹ A 2015 study found that 42% of Kansas youth who had been incarcerated were incarcerated again within three years of release, and approximately 80% of youth placed in facilities were assessed as low to moderate risk.² These findings drove Kansas' shift toward reserving secure placement for the highest-risk cases and expanding community-based alternatives.

Youth justice reforms have produced measurable improvements in outcomes. Kansas has reduced reliance on secure placements, lowered recidivism, and increased use of evidence-based interventions that allow youth to remain safely in their communities. Immediate Intervention Programs and other community-based responses now serve most youth entering the system, and data from the Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee indicates these diversion programs have completion rates exceeding 90%.³ These changes have also allowed the state to reinvest savings from reduced incarceration into services that address underlying needs such as behavioral health treatment, family support, and early intervention.

HB 2639 builds on this progress by expanding access to crisis stabilization and other community-based responses designed to intervene earlier and more effectively. Strengthening

¹ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention "Statistical Briefing Book" 2015.

² Kansas Juvenile Oversight Committee. "Annual Report." 2025.

³ KDOC, JCF Admissions and Releases Dashboard, <https://www.doc.ks.gov/dashboards/annual-report-dashboards>

these services is essential to maintaining the progress Kansas has achieved and ensuring that youth receive appropriate care before challenges escalate to deeper system involvement.

Sustained progress, however, depends on consistent implementation, coordinated agency standards, and reliable funding structures that preserve the capacity of community-based programs to serve youth effectively.

Secure placements remain significantly more expensive than community-based services. It costs the state approximately \$134,000 annually to incarcerate a youth in a correctional facility, while community-based services cost a fraction of that amount.⁴ Kansas' reinvestment strategy has allowed savings from reduced confinement to support evidence-based interventions, with more than \$26 million reinvested into community programs for Kansas youth in FY 2024. However, this funding structure must remain sustainable. If HB 2329 becomes law, the same funding source would support the provisions of both bills, which could rapidly draw down reinvestment funds and undermine long-term service availability at the crisis stabilization centers. Ensuring fiscal sustainability is essential to preserving the effectiveness of Kansas' youth justice reforms and the expanded services set forth in HB 2639.

Kansas Appleseed also supports the expansion of services for crossover youth HB 2639 would effectuate. However, the definition of crossover youth included in HB 2639 differs from the definition currently used by the Kansas Department of Corrections. Inconsistent definitions across systems may lead to uneven eligibility determinations and gaps in service access for vulnerable youth. Research shows that when justice-involved youth fail to receive adequate care they are more likely to fall deeper into the juvenile justice system and be incarcerated as an adult. Conversely, delinquency rates can drop 30-82% and court charges decrease 15-30% among youth who do receive care, particularly crossover youth.⁵

To promote consistency and continuity of care, Kansas Appleseed recommends aligning the bill with the KDOC's definition of crossover youth:

"A young person age 10 or older with any level of concurrent involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice system

- Involvement in the juvenile justice system includes: court ordered community supervision, and Immediate Intervention Programs (IIP).
- Involvement in the child welfare system includes: out of home placement, as assigned investigation of alleged abuse or neglect with a youth person

⁴ Urban Institute, 2020, "Data Snapshot of Youth Incarceration in Kansas," <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102130/data-snapshot-of-youth-incarceration-in-kansas-2020-update.pdf>

⁵ Hahn, J. W. (2016). *Meeting the needs of infants in child abuse and neglect cases: A process evaluation of the Strong Starts Court Initiative* (SSCI Report). Center for Court Innovation. https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/SSCI_Report.pdf; Office of Justice Programs. (2023, March 1). *Child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement* (NCJ 306463). U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ojp.gov/library/publications/child-welfare-and-juvenile-justice-system-involvement>; Taussig, H. N., Dmitrieva, J., Garrido, E. F., Cooley, J. L., & Crites, E. (2021). Fostering Healthy Futures Preventive Intervention for Children in Foster Care: Long-term Delinquency Outcomes from a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Prevention science : the official journal of the Society for Prevention Research*, 22(8), 1120–1133. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-021-01235-6>

name as alleged perpetrator, and/or participate in voluntary/preventive services that are open for services.”⁶

Aligning statutory language with existing agency standards will help ensure that expanded services reach all eligible youth and are implemented consistently across jurisdictions.

Frustrations over continued challenges in the youth justice system are understandable, but returning to policies that increase reliance on detention is not the solution. The answer is to expand the availability of services to prevent system involvement, including crisis stabilization services and other early intervention supports presented in HB 2639. These approaches are consistent with evidence-based practice and the goals of Kansas’ youth justice reforms.

Efforts must focus on widening the door to early interventions that are successful and aligned with best practice. HB 2639 represents an important step in that direction when implemented consistently and supported with sustainable funding.

Thank you for your time,

Brenna Visocsky

⁶ Kansas Department of Corrections. (2022, November 14). *Glossary — Juvenile Services supervision standards*. Kansas Department of Corrections. <https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/supervision-standards/glossary#C>