



January 20, 2023

The Honorable Susan Concannon
Chair, House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care
Kansas State Legislature
6425 SW 6th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66615-1099

RE: OPPOSITION TO HB2024

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am an attorney who represents adult adopted people in Minnesota and throughout the United States. I am considered a national expert on issues related to adoptee rights, whether those relate to identity documents, sealed records, birth certificates, or to adult intercountry adoptees who have been denied U.S. citizenship despite being adopted by U.S. citizen parents. I write to oppose HB2024 and its effort to extend Kansas safe haven law to include abandonment of infants in “infant refuge bassinets.”

I take no specific position on the overall merits of Kansas’s current newborn safe haven law, other than to note that, as stated in the recent article from experts on this issue “safe havens operate not as a system for protecting newborns but rather as a tool for separating vulnerable parents from their children.”

I specifically oppose the creation of a new process in Kansas to allow legal and anonymous abandonment of babies in so-called “infant refuge bassinets,” electrically-powered incubators built into the exterior walls of public buildings. These “baby boxes” are unnecessary, lead to corruption within adoption, perverts the purpose of child welfare laws, and ultimately work to take further advantage of vulnerable mothers. Because baby box abandonment under this bill does not require face-to-face relinquishment under current safe haven laws, these impersonal and anonymous boxes—which are medieval in origin—will contribute to corrupt adoption practices. Unlicensed facilitators and even corrupt adoption agencies will no doubt put undue pressure on young women to skip the legal and social protections available to them, for the sole financial benefit of others. Corruption in adoption occurs because of the secrecy

that surrounds the entire process. Making it even more secretive through anonymous box drops will not improve child welfare in Kansas, nor in any other state. There is zero evidence that it does.

This bill continues a systemic failure to address the root causes of a problem: the lack of adequate prenatal and postnatal healthcare, inadequate income support for pregnant women, and lack of resources for women in crisis. For all of these reasons, baby boxes do not have the support of the adoptee community nor the support of national advocates who are committed to maintaining current safe haven laws in all fifty states, without adding anonymous baby boxes to that mix.

I ask that you vote DO NOT PASS on HB2024. While the bill may be a popular “quick fix” proposal, it is more of a gimmick than a solution. Further, it will arrive as a harbinger of a broken and corrupt system that will continue to prey on vulnerable women for the financial gain of others.

Best regards,

ADOPTEE RIGHTS LAW CENTER PLLC



Gregory D. Luce