



Kansas CASA Association

25 West 5th Ave., Emporia, KS 66801

785-625-3049

www.kansascasa.org

February 20, 2019

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND SENIORS

Testimony of Mickey Edwards, State Director In support of HB 2360

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. CASA volunteers serve the most vulnerable children in our state. It is important that the individuals appointed in their cases be thoroughly vetted to ensure safety of those children. As such, the 23 local CASA programs in our state perform every background check we have at our disposal, including KBI criminal history checks.

Local CASA programs are constantly and actively recruiting for new potential volunteers in order to grow their service base and provide CASA volunteers to more children at the attention of the courts. Every potential volunteer or program staff member must undergo an application and screening process to include:

- Three written references
- Personal interview
- Social security number verification
- Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant has lived and worked for the last 7 years
- State criminal records for locations in which the applicant has lived and worked for the last 7 years
- FBI or other national criminal database
- National sex offender registry
- Child abuse registry or child protective services check in all states in which the applicant has lived and worked for the last 7 years

Every background check of program staff members and volunteers must be re-run every four years.

The Kansas Supreme Court Standards for CASA Programs and the National CASA Association Local Program Standards each outline the requirements for background checks of both volunteers and staff members. Local programs must adhere to both sets of these standards in order to be certified by the Kansas Office of Judicial Administration to function as a CASA program in Kansas. In addition, the OJA certification process for individual CASA volunteers requires successful completion of background checks. No individual in Kansas can be a CASA volunteer without OJA's certification status.

Without access to KBI criminal history background checks, no local CASA program would be able to certify new volunteers, and every current volunteer would eventually have to be decertified upon the 4 year anniversary of their last background check. HB2360 will ensure that local CASA programs have access to criminal history background checks for all current and potential volunteers and staff members. The Kansas CASA Association respectfully asks the committee to support House bill 2360.

I am for the child™