



Senate Judiciary Committee

March 7, 2019

Testimony of Ron Holm

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Proponent of Senate Bill 157

Dear Chairman Wilborn and Members of the Committee,

The Kansas Family Preservation Coalition (KFPC) was founded in part to serve Kansas by promoting a properly informed approach to the process in which separated or separating families form and develop their parenting plans and co-parenting skills. The passion for this part of our mission was born out of the apparent misunderstandings, lack of education, and the perceptions that many, both inside and outside the legal system, have accepted for far too long. Current practice too often leads not only to outcomes which are not in a child's best interest but are more likely to replicate and create more and more of the same problems plaguing our families. **We believe SB157 represents an excellent step in the right direction to bring hope and inspiration to a system failing itself and our children.**

Within the KFPC one of our greatest concerns is that of domestic violence. **SB157 offers much needed safety and protection to vital parent child relationships by ensuring, before any facts are heard or evidence is presented, that a child's entire support network remains intact.** We have spoken with far too many parents, both moms and dads, who have remained in both physically and emotionally abusive peril for fear their relationship with their children would be minimized by current standard parenting time practices. SB157 provides safety by ensuring an abusive partner can't unilaterally gain total power and control by simply winning the race to the courthouse or requiring a parent to stay in an abusive situation in order to maintain a right to their children.

Another troubling concern we have arose through our team's attendance to the Kansas Judicial Council Family Law Advisory Board meetings where HB2529 from 2018 was discussed. During the October 12, 2018, meeting more than two thirds of the panel directly described a '**lack of judicial education**', or made comments similar to the following as quoted from the official minutes: **"The problems are caused by lack of education and Judges who default to guidelines, whether written or**

based on implicit biases held by the Judge”. This education issue is referenced in the final report, but we remain desirous of an explanation that would cause a majority of the board to point out this deficiency if the problem was in fact only limited to a few select smaller districts or Judges. Respectfully, our organization does not think it is responsible policy to prominently make such observations and then fail to offer meaningful solutions. **SB157 provides a sound policy and legal basis families may rely upon to shield themselves from decisions made not on the individual needs of the family but often only on expediency and improperly informed practices.**

The children we are discussing today are sometimes three to four generations (or more) removed from the experience of an intact nuclear family as these “education” issues have led to not just a few bad decisions lacking in individual consideration, but cultural norms pushed broadly by an adversarial system, a system in which some Kansas counties practice guidelines that remain unpublished and hidden from public view. Other guidelines, even if prominently published, vary from county to county despite the fact that these Kansas children and families having very similar needs best served by each fit parent having the opportunity for maximum, instead of standardized minimum, involvement. **SB157 provides a safe starting point where parents then have the means and ability to reach truly individualized parenting plan arrangements.**

Culturally, we point at absent parents with an arsenal of derogatory names and as a society fail to ask if we ever gave that parent the opportunity. We teach parents helplessness through prohibitively expensive and complicated processes, confronting them with a system rife with biased personal subjectivity and little policy guidance. Divorce is also a very scary and often hopeless situation for children involved as well, and factors such as simply being a breadwinner for your family during a marriage can mean, whether you are a mother or a father, that your and your children’s relationship may be put at risk of being regulated by being forced to become a weekend visitor simply for no other reason than guidelines. **SB157 represents hope and opportunity.**

Further, on the education issue, our team at KFPC has, from its inception, worked closely with many researchers and educators on the topics of parenting plans and co-parenting, as well as with many of those actively working on this type of legislation across the country in concert with our efforts to improve the quality of education readily available on this topic. We believe SB157 represents a step in the right direction which will contribute to the success of families for generations.

If we may be of service, please do not hesitate to contact us on this topic of utmost importance.

For our children’s future we pray you will recommend SB157 for passage to the Senate body.

Sincerely and respectfully submitted,



Ron Holm