

Senate Transportation Committee

March 1st, 2022

SB506 – Providing for the north central Kansas down syndrome society distinctive license plate

To Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Claeys, Ranking Minority Hawk and Senate Transportation Committee members:

Good morning. My name is Shella Thoman and while I'm here to discuss a license plate I first wanted to say thank you. I'm not just a mom that is passionate about the acceptance of her son with Down syndrome, I'm also the County Clerk in Cloud County. That gives me a little bit of an idea of the shoes that you fill sitting in those seats. I've also been a friend of Senator Bowers for over 25 years and talk to her often and that gives me a little more insight. So, thank you. Thank you for showing up and stepping up and being passionate about making a difference for the people of this Great State!

This time 14 years ago I was having a normal pregnancy, that May I had a normal delivery and within 24 hours our son Isaac went home. When he was 3 days old, he was life flighted to Wichita and on day 8 he was officially diagnosed with Trisomy 21, better known as Down syndrome. The doctor walked out the door, I picked Isaac up and I cried. I certainly didn't know anything about Down syndrome and I could only recall 2 people in my life that had a disability and they both needed significant care. Later that day a mom from the Down Syndrome Society of Wichita who had a 10-year-old son came to talk to us, she told me that our life was going to be incredible, there would be challenges, but our life had just changed for the better. Honestly, I did not believe her, she didn't know the first thing about our life and how this diagnosis was going to change the entire dynamic.

Within a couple of weeks, a mom of a 7-year-old from the North Central Kansas Down Syndrome Society came to visit me. She basically told me the same thing as the 1st mom. Within weeks I learned that I have an uncle that did his thesis on Down syndrome and was beyond excited for our journey. I started seeing people with Down syndrome places I went and meeting people that knew someone with Down syndrome. Within 6 months I had been to 2 Down syndrome awareness walks called Buddy Walks. I began to understand what those moms were talking about. Fast forward 14 years and I can't imagine our life without Isaac and our Down syndrome tribe of the Lucky Few. The phrase The Lucky Few started as something that came from another mom's heart when talking about her 2 children with Down syndrome and is exactly how I feel about our life. Don't get me wrong, it hasn't been all peaches and cream, there's been challenges and struggles. That entire dynamic of our life, it did change, and just as those moms said it has been for the better.