



# GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

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February 11, 2013

To: The House Judiciary Committee

Re: House Bill Concerning Citizen Grand Jury

Hello, my name is Dr. Michael O'Donnell. I pastor Grace Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas. I want to thank you for giving me a few minutes to express my support for this legislation and my reasoning for my support. I have had the privilege of serving many citizens in Wichita for over thirty years and I have witnessed many areas of injustice. I do not believe that there is a "large conspiracy", but I do feel that our system is not positioned to help those who are unfamiliar with the process and do not "know" how to operate in the system. I work with families who struggle in family court. I volunteer at Eldorado Correctional Facility where we work with the men there under a ministry called "Malachi Dad's" where we work to improve the families of the inmates with the distinct purpose of trying to ensure that the children of inmates do not also become incarcerated.

While I could share many stories with you about those who feel they did not have a "fair" or "complete" hearing of their case. I believe that our state faces problems from what I believe to be at best judicial error, and at worst judicial malpractice. While many in our community would like to ignore problems in the judiciary, when a problem strikes you or one you love you will find little recourse. In the past few months I have been introduced to a number of "citizens of good moral character" who have suffered from the hands of our judicial system. A young man whom I have know for twenty-five years, Todd Wait, has had his property wrongfully taken from him. A young mother, expressed how her children were taken from her custody, by a system that treated her unfairly. This is not an new issue, I wrote in support of my friend, then State Representative Dick Kelsey who took a stand on this issue. I agree with then Rep. Kelsey's statement to the Wichita Eagle on June 26, 2008, when he said: "As a state representative, I and most of my colleagues from Sedgwick County have had contact with parents who felt their kids had not been treated right by the "system". A thorough, independent investigation of this issue would be of value for our county and the children of this county." I would ask that this investigation not only begin immediately, but in this process we adopt a procedure for citizens who have been "harmed" by the system have a means of recourse (possibly a type of Ombudsman) outside the judicial branch itself. In so doing we would allow someone "outside" the system to review perceived malpractice.

In conclusion, while certainly many of us will never have the need for such an office. For those whom do have an "encounter" with "injustice" to know that they have a process for securing "just" solutions will make all of us "rest easier".

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Michael O'Donnell  
Sr. Pastor  
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HOUSE JUDICIARY

DATE: 2/12/13

ATTACHMENT 5