

MINUTES OF THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Greg Smith at 10:50am on Wednesday, February 11, 2015, 346-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Jeff King – Excused

Committee staff present:

Lauren Douglass, Legislative Research Department

Robert Allison-Gallimore, Legislative Research Department

Natalie Nelson, Legislative Research Department

Suzanne Nelson, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Katherine Goyette, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Jason Thompson, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Lori Ross, President and CEO, Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (MFCAA);

Tina Woods, President, Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC);

Kathy Armstrong, Assistant Director for Legal Services, Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF);

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Hearing on: SB37 — Enacting the Kansas foster parents' bill of rights act.

Vice-Chair Greg Smith opened the hearing on **SB37** and asked Jason Thompson for an overview of the bill, also known as the Kansas foster parents' bill of rights act.

Lori Ross presented oral testimony in support of the bill. She related that it is critically important for foster parents to have easy access to a bill of rights which are protected in law. She told the committee that retention of foster parents is important to any child welfare system. When they are retained, their skills and abilities develop, enabling them to work with children with more difficult mental health and behavioral issues, and also contributes to stability, which helps foster children develop healthy attachments. ([Attachment 1](#))

Nancy Strouse, Executive Director, Kansas Judicial Council, submitted written-only testimony in support of **SB37** which provides background on the study process that resulted in the substance of the bill. ([Attachment 2](#))

Tina Woods testified in opposition to **SB37**. She related that she spent a number of years in foster care before she aged out of the system. She told the committee that she developed lasting ties with her former foster mother, who continues to be a huge support in her life. Ms. Woods believes that foster parents already have rights and they do not need to be journalized in statutes. ([Attachment 3](#))

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Judiciary at 10:50am on Wednesday, February 11, 2015, 346-S of the Capitol.

Kathy Armstrong gave neutral oral testimony advising of the steps DCF has taken to address concerns of foster parents, including developing and adopting a Parents' Rights document, which is available on the DCF website. There is ongoing collaboration in a work group organized by the Kansas Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (KFAPA) and numerous stakeholders, agencies, and entities involved in the Kansas child welfare system and have met regularly to address concerns and issues related to foster parents' rights. This group, when asked, voted by a strong majority that foster parents' rights should be in policy form, rather than statute. ([Attachment 4](#))

There being no other questions, comments, or testimony, Vice-Chair Smith closed the hearing on **SB37**.

Possible action on bills previously heard

There was no action taken on bills today.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 am. The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 10:30 am.