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Testimony before House Judiciary Committee

By Natalie Gorman, LMSW  
February 13, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ranking Member, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 2205. KVC fully supports the intent of this bill.

I work as an intensive in-home therapist with KVC Behavioral Healthcare. We work with children in need of care as a subcontractor for the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). In my 10-year career, I have had the opportunity to work with numerous children, many of whom were able to return to a family that was safer and better than when they were removed. Sadly, some of the children that I served were never able to return home, but their stories did not end there. Instead, many of those children were adopted by loving families and given new "forever homes."

HB 2205 will shorten the amount of time a child in foster care has to wait to be adopted by a loving family. The current law requires the court to schedule the adoption hearing not less than 30 days, or more than 60 days, after the filing of the petition. In our adoptions, called agency adoptions, this 30-day wait only serves to delay final permanency for these children.

By the time an agency adoption has been filed by an attorney, we have already completed home studies and carefully assessed the fitness of these adoptive parents for their new role. By the time the adoption is to be finalized, the legal parental rights of the biological parents have been terminated or have been relinquished. DCF supports our agency and attorneys by supplying a waiver to the Court for filing under the 30 days, however this creates one more unnecessary step for permanency. It should be noted that not all counties will utilize this 30-day waiver since the statute specifically indicates adoptions occur at least 30 days but no more than 60 days. This inconsistency across counties can cause unnecessary delays.

HB 2205 does not remove any safeguards that protect children or families, but does streamline the process and make the time between a child being thrown into turmoil and finding a safe, forever place that much shorter. We fully support the intent of the bill, which is to expedite the achievement of forever families for children and remove unnecessary barriers in this process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.