

January 29, 2020

Hon. Chairman Patton
Kansas House Judiciary Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

RE: HB2333: An Act concerning children and minors; relating to adoption; date of final decree; amending K.S.A. 2018 Supp. 59-2134 and repealing the existing section.

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Rekha Sharma-Crawford and I am an attorney. For the past 20 years, I have dedicated my practice to helping individuals navigate the countries complicated immigration laws; complexities which multiply exponentially at the intersection of state and federal law. I offer my testimony in support of HB2333 and ask the committee to fully support the proposed amendment so that no Kansas family will have to face the difficult and heartbreaking choice between family unity and family separation; a choice that no family should ever have to make.

Adopted children are different. They complete families stitched together as a matter of the heart. Not only do they offer joy to parents, but in some instances, they are what allow individuals to experience all that comes with becoming a parent in the first instance. In order to protect this sacred relationship, Kansas has long guaranteed adopted children the same rights and responsibilities as those enjoyed by natural born children. By recognizing adoption as a process by which children become the legitimate child of their parents, Kansas law has diligently and humanely erased any taint which either the parent or the child may feel for having to rely on a judicial process. The law even provides the child, upon adoption, with a new birth certificate to commemorate the family's new beginning.

In addition, there is no way to un-adopt a child in Kansas. Perhaps lending to the idea that such families are forever sealed to one another, Kansas law has, for decades, determined adoption as a means to keep families together.

Given these extraordinary protections, it seems inconceivable that a Kansas state adoption order, could ever be insufficient to guarantee a family remain united. Yet, sometimes delays in completing the adoption process can cause a series of events to unfold that threaten family unity.

Military families are different too. Members of the military often sacrifice their home life in the service of their country. Putting duty to country above all else, these men and women give of themselves in ways that many cannot. In so doing, delays to the completion

of the adoption process may result in their children being treated in ways other children are not. That is just not right.

By giving Kansas state court judges the discretion to protect the child's best interest, and where the facts compel, make the adoption effective from the time the bona fide relationship was created, the law would ensure all Kansas children were treated equally. That is right.

The amendment offered to K.S.A. 59-2134 recognizes that Kansas judges are in the best position to make sure that Kansas families are protected. It recognizes that harmony and equality are the hallmarks of domestic relations. And it recognizes that where the State of Kansas has specifically recognized the adoption of a child and the creation of a family, it should mean something in every aspect possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rekha Sharma-Crawford
Sharma-Crawford Attorneys at Law
515 Avenida Cesar E. Chavez
Kansas City, Missouri 64108
Rekha@Sharma-Crawford.com