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Proponent Testimony of SB 157: *Creating presumptions related to temporary parenting plans and defining related terms under the Kansas family law code.*

Representatives,

I'm asking that you vote in favor of passing SB157 - *Creating presumptions related to temporary parenting plans and defining related terms under the Kansas family law code.* This bill has strong support in the Senate. It was introduced in the Senate by 17 bipartisan sponsors and passed in 39-1 a few weeks ago. Kansans support shared parenting too. In a 2019 statewide survey via Researchscape International, 89 percent support shared parenting in divorce.

Shared parenting is a movement that is happening across the country. The benefits are less conflict during divorce and over 50 scientific and clinical studies have shown that kids who have shared parenting after divorce are healthier, are lower risk for a number of social problems, and they become better citizens. Shared parenting has been shown to work for kids of all ages including infants. It has also been shown to be true in high conflict situations.

In 2017, Kentucky became the first true shared parenting state in the nation. The Kentucky law establishes a "presumption, rebuttable by a preponderance of evidence, that joint custody and equally shared parenting time is in the best interest of the child." This means only fit parents will receive shared parenting. Parents with a domestic violence finding will not qualify for equal parenting time. This law creating a presumption of shared parenting during temporary custody orders was so well received that they passed a follow up bill that made it for permanent orders a year later.

The positive results were seen nearly immediately in Kentucky family court rooms according to an article co-written by Alexandra Beckman, founder of Parental Alienation in Kentucky, and Jamie Sprinkle, founder of Kentuckians Against Domestic Violence. Both women are former domestic violence survivors and fierce advocates for shared parenting. Despite the state's increasing population, new family court cases plummeted by 11% within just 12 months of the bill being passed. Those highest conflict cases involving domestic violence showed decline by dropping 445 cases as the complete Shared Parenting Law took effect in 2018 versus the prior year. Kentucky domestic shelters saw a dramatic decline in the percentage of guests with a domestic violence history who have children.

According to the most recent Shared Parenting Report Card published by the National Parents Organization (2019), 180 shared parenting bills have been introduced in the last five years. While a number of those bills are on the cusp of advancement, 13 bills in nine states have already been signed into law: Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah and Virginia. In that same report card, the National Parents Organization ranked Kansas as only a C-, citing that the state does not have preference for Joint Legal Custody to include Joint Physical Custody based on maximum practicable parenting time and other factors.

Our children in Kansas deserve better than a C-. In reading the additional 88 testimonies that our members have provided, it's clear to me that we have work to do on our laws and our judicial system. Please vote in favor of this bill so that children in Kansas can benefit from this commonsense legislation.

Thank you,

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