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Written Testimony to the Kansas House Judiciary Committee

Kansas State Capitol Building, Room 346S Topeka, KS

Support for Senate Bill 157

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am asking for your support of SB157. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank you for answering my many emails on this bill.

I am a grandmother of 3 children whose parents are going through a divorce. My grandchildren -- as I believe are most children -- are extremely loved by both parents and by all of their grandparents - one set on our side and two sets on the mom's side. Last April my grandchildren's mother filed for divorce. The case is ongoing with Temporary Orders for 11 months.

Before the temporary custody orders, the kids were with their dad every evening and every weekend. He helped make dinners, gave baths and read to them before bed. He was the parent that signed them up for school, camps and activities and he worked to get his 3 year old daughter in an early childhood enrichment program as an advanced child, to pair with those needing development. He worked with the DeSoto School District to get his older daughter placed in the gifted program. She is now a Freshman and at the top of her class. He arranged for doctor appointments and went with them on the first appointment, he took them to school, and extracurricular activities. He was a full time, active, nurturing and loving father.

Since the temporary parenting court orders, he sees them 4 overnights a month. Their mother is with the children every day. She does not allow the children away from her to see him or their Grandparents during "her time". She refuses to negotiate with him on a 50/50 parenting plan. After refusing to discuss any parenting plan for months the court ordered conciliation.

She still will not discuss an equal parenting plan. She has a favorable child custody arrangement and has no motivation to negotiate a plan where both parents are involved in raising the kids. If the 50/50 default had been in place this court directed action would not have been going on for almost a year, lengthening the divorce process, draining savings and creating imbalance and upheaval in the kids lives.

The children no longer benefit from two loving parents equally involved in raising them. Their Dad sees them two evenings a week for four (4) hours, but when they are there, they are so excited to see him, they don't settle down until it is almost time to leave. This arrangement denies the kids the extended time with their dad that's needed to maintain a deep connection.

He saves his vacation to be able to spend it with his children. The year ended and he had 4 unused weeks. At a time when the children needed more attention and warmth, they were denied special time with their dad because the Mom would not allow the kids to be with him during "Her time". They are also denied time with their paternal grandparents for educational outings.

In my son's case, his wife was much better at being a homemaker than being a breadwinner. It was what she wanted and as a couple they decided that they would sacrifice to provide the children with this arrangement. He still was involved during the day and participated in important activities during the workweek. Now he has been penalized because he was the breadwinner and not the stay at home parent. Being at home with a parent during the weekday is not the only thing important to a child. Being with both parents is important. Kids with two parents do better in school and are less likely to get in trouble with the law. Shared parenting is critical. Being with grandparents and other loved ones is also important. Caring relationships and nurturing experiences that Grandparents provide are also important for a child to develop to their potential.

My son's wife made the decision to leave him. He is an Eagle Scout, has no vices, stays in shape, and volunteers at church. She left him and took the children. He has not changed his mind about wanting to be with them everyday. Since that is no longer possible, both parents should be able to equally invest their time raising their children. It is not right that the children are denied anything less than 50% with both parents when there are two loving parents, each with unique and special skills, values and personalities to share with the children.

I believe this is not a unique case. Most parents love their children and want to be active in raising them. A default 50/50 custody will put families starting a new life on that path.

Please vote in favor of this bill.

Pam Lee

Mother and Grandmother