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19 Feb 2019

Written Testimony to the Kansas State Senate Judiciary Committee

Kansas State Capitol Building, Room 346-S
Topeka, KS 66612

SUPPORT SB 157

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Michael Partridge Jr. and I am native of Topeka, Kansas. I graduated from Shawnee Heights High School in 2006 and I have been serving on active Duty in the United States Navy since April, 2009. I am currently serving at Strike Fighter Squadron One Four Seven (VFA-147) on board Naval Air Station Lemoore, CA, although I maintain my residency in Kansas. My son, Kamden Partridge, was born on 30 May 2009, one week before I graduated basic training at Great Lakes, Illinois. His mother and I married a few months later in 2010 after I was stationed in Whidbey Island, Washington. After returning from my first deployment in December 2010 I enjoyed the next 12 months bonding with my son and new family in Washington. However, in January of 2012 my son's mother decided to relocate back to Topeka with my son without my consent. This was the beginning of long stretches of time that my son and I would go without seeing each other. Still my wife at the time, she agreed to move back out to Washington with our son in December of 2012. After only one week together again in our home, she decided she would move back to Kansas, this time she left our son with me. Shortly after, she filed for divorce and I was ordered to return our son to her on my birthday that year on 31 March, 2013.

After several uncooperative conciliation sessions, and with legal representation, I was forced to ask a Judge to adopt a parenting plan recommended by the conciliator because as a co-parent, my wife was not agreeable to anything remotely close to comparable parenting time. As a willing, able, and competent parent I was left with the burden of proving to the court that our son deserves just as much time with his father that cares for and loves him no less than his mother. Five years later, after abiding by a defective parenting plan that has restricted and hindered a meaningful relationship between my son and I, I requested to go back to conciliation in May of 2018 to have the parenting plan modified to increase parenting time with my son and also adopt KSA 23-3217, a recent statute that provides additional protection of parenting time for active duty military members if deployed or mobilized. The conciliator agreed that it was in the child's best interest to increase and protect my son's time together according to KSA 32-2317, so they made the recommendation accordingly. My case is set for hearing in March 2019 as my son's mother is not agreeable to the recommendation.

It has never been disputed that my son has a significant and loving relationship with both his mother and I, but the fact remains that I have had to constantly prove this in order to remain in his life and maintain a meaningful relationship as frequent as possible. The current family court system in our country has been nothing short of a major disservice to our children by assuming that children should spend more time with parent A when parent B is no less willing and able. Kansas is no different, and we the people are here to tell you that the presumption should be that children benefit from shared

parenting and deserve to have equal time with both parents. So much time and money is thrown away through senseless litigation when children are kept from willing and able co-parents. Time is precious and memories are lost forever. Under the current system there are no winners, and the children are the ones who suffer the most.

I want to personally thank you for your time and consideration, especially Senators Wagle and Longbine for listening to my story and most importantly supporting this bill. As a native Kansan, devoted father and Uniformed Service member I am writing to urge for the remaining committee members support and sponsorship of SB 157.

Very Respectfully,

Michael D. Partridge Jr.