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Senate Judiciary Committee

Proponent Testimony for SB 301

Chair Warren, Vice Chair Wilborn, Ranking Member Haley and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today in support of SB 301, legislation that would create The Office of the Child Advocate. This important legislation will provide much needed accountability to the child welfare system, which is necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of Kansas children.

Throughout my tenure in the legislature, regardless of what party occupies the governor's office, accountability has been lacking in our child welfare system. SB 301 addresses that problem by setting up the office of the Child Advocate within the Office of the Attorney General, which would ensure an independent and impartial review of disputed actions or inactions regarding any child at risk of abuse or neglect by the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the contracting agencies of the department, and the Kansas Department of Corrections. Children in such situations deserve a voice - someone that is removed from politics and brings an independent set of eyes to examine the circumstances, and truly *advocates* for what is in the best interest of the child. This bill accomplishes that goal.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of SB 301.