



March 20, 2018
Committees on Federal and State Affairs
Proponent Testimony for HB 2687 and SB 401

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for allowing us the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 2687 and SB 401, on behalf of the over 40 members of the Kansas Truth Caucus. This legislation would provide critical protections for our faith-based adoption providers and child-placing agencies in Kansas. These faith-based providers have been serving the children and families of Kansas for over sixty years, providing a crucial link in the network of agencies working to find loving homes for some of the most needy and hard-to-place children.

This legislation has been narrowly drafted to not include the state's two foster care contractors. It also does not affect the many secular providers serving in Kansas.

The protections provided by this legislation would merely ensure that these faith-based entities remain free to continue serving the children and families of Kansas. It is unconscionable to think government would force faith-based providers to choose between helping children or operating in accordance to their faith, but that is exactly what is happening. In both Massachusetts and Illinois faith-based providers have been shut down because they refused to violate their deeply held religious beliefs. Over 3000 children in Illinois alone were displaced because Catholic Charities was forced to close because they refused to stop exercising their faith. Mother Teresa herself would have been prohibited from serving children in Illinois because of her religious beliefs. Is that really the path we believe is best for our state and the children who depend on our faith-based providers? We don't think so.

The reality is, we desperately need more providers serving Kansas children, not fewer. There are thousands of children in foster care, many of whom are in need of forever homes. Our faith-based providers serve these children, oftentimes the hardest to place, and we should protect, not restrict, their ability to do so.

Please pass this legislation, so Kansas can join the seven states (North Dakota, Texas, Michigan, South Dakota, Rhode Island, Mississippi and Virginia) that already have laws in place to protect faith-based providers.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Kansas Truth Caucus