

3/24/2021

My name is Richard Smith and I am a proud Kansas resident as well as a 32 year retired Veteran having served in the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, and the U.S. Air Force. I am offering my testimony as a proponent of HB 2422.

I submit before you today the testimony of a father with a daughter that was married before the age of eighteen and the effect of that decision that I have witnessed. Military life was not easy on my marriage and it ended in divorce with my ex-wife having custodial custody over our two children. I did my best as a father to support my children and to back my ex-wife on her decisions raising our children. My daughter was married at the age of 17 to a man that I knew nothing about. I found out about the marriage after the fact. I was never consulted nor did I ever give my permission for this marriage to take place. My daughter was an ace in high school and loved to dance. She earned a scholarship to college in dance. Being married at that young age put a strain on her studies as she battled with trying to balance being a wife and a student. Unbeknownst to me, as she hid this very well, she soon fell into the trap of serving an abusive alcoholic husband. She was berated by her Mother in Law as a sub- par wife for not attending to her husbands ever need. This took its toll on her. She called me crying saying that she could not continue with school because she needed to be a good wife and be there for her husband and tend to his issues. My daughter has since divorced this man but has lost so much in the process. She is now a single mother of 4 with a deadbeat ex-husband that does little to nothing to assist in the care of their children. She has struggled since that day and today she continues to battle back from effects of this marriage at such a young age.

In the attached article, Early Teen Marriage and Future Poverty written by Gordon B. Dahl and published by NCBI and (a government organization) "Teenage marriage is also associated with much lower education levels; **women who marry before the age of 19 are 50% more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college** (U.S. census data tabulations; Klepinger, Lundberg, and Plotnick 1999; Ribar 1994).” I would urge you to take a moment to read this article. Though it was written 11 years ago I would dare to say the data has only gotten worse.

I would like to add that the data is available to support a decision to update this law. For example, a simple Google search provided **that 48 percent of those who marry before the age of 18 are likely to divorce within 10 years, compared to 25 percent of those who marry after the age of 25**. This means that it is likely that this has already put an additional strain on our Kansas welfare system.

I close on this matter not just as a parent of a daughter that has suffered due to teenage marriage but also as a Kansas father concerned for other Kansas families that they do not have to experience and endure what we have endured as a family. I would ask that you vote to update this law and make the minimum age to marry 18 years of age.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard A. Smith