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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 am thankful to be here to speak to you today in support of SB 157. I thank all who introduced the bill so we could have our story heard. I am a Grandparent. Some ask what I am doing here. Divorce affects us all. I find that my story and the stories of other Grandparents are very much alike. We spend our whole life wanting the simpler days when we can spend time with our grandchildren and then one day some judge somewhere who doesn't know us or our Grandchildren determines that our side of the family should not see our grandchildren.

I am older, I have been around for a while. I know the importance to a child of having both a Mother and a Father in their life. Research proves it. Fathers and Mothers teach them different but equally important life skills. I am a Great Grandmother I have lived the effects that divorce has on extended families. Some of my cousins I don't know because of a divorce, some of my nieces and nephews are not at family reunions because they are with the other parent that week-end. My children and my Grandchildren are affected by divorce. There is hardly anyone who is not. Just because it has become commonplace doesn't mean it is not devastating to those who experience it. The children involved are living through the death of their family as they know it. Research shows they go through the grieving process. Many times, getting hung up in some of those stages of grief for years.

We the Grandparents, we are the front line of trying to help them through this horrific tragedy that just struck their life.

1. I would like to share with you the story about a little 5-year-old girl of divorce who was at my house almost every day. She did everything with me and the same love that was given to my children was extended to her. We baked cookies, she helped set the table for dinner, we went swimming together just to name a few things, But she would often say "I wish you were my Mommy". I wondered why she said that when she was offered everything my children received. Then one day I realized I could never fill that empty spot in her heart, in her life where her Mommy belonged. She and I had and have a wonderful relationship and still do, but she was denied a Mother/Daughter Relationship she was entitled too. The child-parent relationship is a unique relationship. No one else can fill the position of a Biological Mother or Father. We can love a child, we can do many things for them and many times provide financially better for them than their biological parents

In the case of my own grandchildren they would come to my house and spend a few days with their cousins. We went on small vacations, they got to know each other, and we build many loving memories together. After the divorce, that does not happen. For them to come takes away precious time from their father who is the non-custodial parent and has 4 days a month to do 30 days' worth of parent-child bonding.

For grandparents whose child gets 80% time find themselves in a very different position. What they thought was going to be carefree retirement years they find themselves thrust into being a parent

again. Many times, when their child moves back home because parenting on their own requires too much for one person to do.

Life Savings, college education funds are spent on fighting for something that shouldn't even be a question. Just because the judge ruled they can't see that child. It does not change the fact that is his family – his biological family forever.

I would like to refer you to read the book "Primal Loss". A book compiled on 70 now adult children and how their parents divorce affected them. Most of them have never spoken of the pain and consequences and they had never been asked and believed no one really wanted to know.

I know that everyone wants children to be fed, clothed, and educated. But we can do so much more than that. Ask the parents, the children, and the extended families of those who have chosen 50/50 custody for their children. Ask them to tell you how they did the best they could for their children in a bad situation and how it turned out.

People do what the law says. Even if we don't agree with it. I beg you to give these kids the right they are entitled too. Give them the right to know and receive the love of each of their parents and extended family. We are a society of educated people – together we can figure out the logistics on how to do this. Let us stop dumping adult problems on children. Making them choose between parents.

I beg you to vote for Senate bill 157 which will give each child an equal starting place to maintain his relationship with each parent and that parent's extended family.

I thank you for your time.