



Kansas
 Department of Social and
 Rehabilitation Services
Children and Family Services

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Written testimony of:

Gina Meier-Hummel, Director of Children and Family Services
 Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
 Topeka, Kansas

presented to:

The Hon. Pete Brungardt and Honorable Members
 of the Kansas Senate Federal and State Affairs:

SRS testimony on SB 262

Chairman Brungardt, Vice-Chair Reitz, Ranking Member Faust-Goudeau and Honored Members:

Mister Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding SB 262. I am Gina Meier-Hummel, Director of Children and Family Services with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS).

SB 262 provides preference to any grandparent when evaluating custody, visitation or residency arrangements when a child is removed from the custody of a parent.

Current federal and state law directs placement preference to relatives when the child cannot be with immediate family. SRS gathers adult relative information upon contact with families and if a child may not be maintained safely in the home, all relatives receive notice of the child's removal. SRS, providers, courts and parties may assess interested relatives for placement and other supports relatives may provide the child through this traumatic time.

Kansas appreciates the role a grandparent serves in their grandchild's life and reflects this important role in the Kansas Child in Need of Care code. Grandparents are parties, entitled to notice of hearings, and may participate in the proceedings. As the agency looks first to relatives and kin for placement, the courts also look first to relatives and kin for placement either through a direct placement or through a recommendation to the Secretary if the child is in the Secretary's custody. We believe the expertise for appropriate placement lies with those in the field evaluating all factors, along with court oversight.