



State of Kansas

## Office of Judicial Administration

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February 20, 2019

House Children and Seniors

Testimony in Favor of HB 2360

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Chairperson Concannon and members of the committee:

I am testifying in support of HB 2360. The Kansas Supreme Court has adopted the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program Standards and Guidelines and Citizen Review Board (CRB) Program Standards and Guidelines developed by the Kansas Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning. The Standards for both programs are administered by the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) and a part of the administration involves conducting a Criminal History Records Inquiry (CHRI) and determining eligibility for every CASA and CRB volunteer. CASA and CRB volunteers come in direct contact with the most vulnerable citizens of Kansas: abused and neglected children and their families. To assure those volunteers have been vetted to the greatest degree it was determined that each volunteer would undergo a background check that included CHRI.

On average, OJA conducts 539 CHRIs each year. All volunteer CHRIs are reviewed and staff determines if the volunteer is eligible to serve as a volunteer. If staff determines a volunteer is not eligible, the CASA or CRB program can request a letter of exception from the chief judge of the judicial district or the district's designated judge. A volunteer is determined to be ineligible when the volunteer:

- has a felony conviction;
- has a misdemeanor which is a sex offense, crime against public morals, a crime affecting family relationships and children, assault, battery, or an attempt to commit any such misdemeanor;
- has been adjudicated a juvenile offender because of having committed an act which, if done by an adult, would constitute the commission of: (1) a felony, or (2) a misdemeanor which is a sex offense, crime against public morals, a crime affecting family relationships and children, assault, battery, or an attempt to commit any such misdemeanor;

- has entered into a diversion agreement involving a charge of child abuse or a sexual offense; or
- has been convicted or adjudicated of any act that would pose a risk to children or the credibility of the CASA program.

The ability to conduct the CHRI for applicant volunteers also allows OJA to enroll CASA and CRB volunteers in Rapback which notifies OJA if the volunteer obtains a charge or is convicted of a crime while serving as a volunteer.

Completion of the CHRI for CASA and CRB volunteers protects the children and families that we serve. Because OJA requests CHRIs on behalf of CASA and the CRB program, it requests favorable passage of HB 2360 out of committee.

I stand for any questions from the committee.