



Kansas Family Voice Testimony in Support of H.B. 2653

House Federal & State Affairs Committee

Brittany Jones

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Chairmen Carpenter, and members of the Committee, my name is Brittany Jones. I am an attorney and the Director of Policy and Engagement for Kansas Family Voice. Kansas Family Voice cares deeply about ensuring our laws protect babies in the womb and ensuring that women in difficult situations receive the support they need throughout their pregnancy. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our reasons for supporting H.B. 2653.

According to the most recent numbers more than 12,000 women in Kansas gave birth in the last year who were unmarried.¹ Many of these women may have been a party to custody and child support proceedings. H.B. 2653 is a simple bill to ensure that during these child support proceedings courts consider the baby still in the womb and make provisions accordingly.

Expenses for children do not start once a baby is born. There are a multitude of doctors' visits and other expenses that a women might need to undertake prior to actually giving birth. It may sound obvious but while cost vary, it is clear that women who are pregnant and give birth bear health care expenses that women who are not pregnant do not bear.²

It is important that the father of these children share in these expenses. While this might already be done in many court rooms, we want to make clear that it is the intent of this Legislature to ensure that these women are financially supported throughout their pregnancy. At least four other states already have similar laws to HB 2653 that allow child support payments for pregnancy related expenses.³

This bill does not change the procedures for ascertaining paternity or any other judicial decisions that a court may be making during these proceedings. It simply ensures that the pregnancy related expenses are considered by the court. There are procedures for courts to determine paternity at earlier and earlier stages of development, but this bill does not mandate any method or modify the courts procedures regarding this in any way. The court is still allowed to use its discretion in making these determinations.

We believe that every woman should be surrounded by a system of support. Pregnancy is no exception. In fact, pregnancy is when a woman likely needs the most support. Fathers are still fathers even if the child is not yet born and our laws should

¹ Kansas Preliminary Birth Report, 2022.

² Forbes, How Much Does It Cost To Have A Baby? 2024 Averages, Jan. 3, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/health-insurance/average-childbirth-cost/>.

³ Wisconsin, New York, Georgia, & Utah



reflect that reality and that responsibility. All this bill does is require a court to consider giving a women support to cover her pregnancy related expenses.

For these reasons, we ask that when H.B. 2653 comes before you for consideration, you pass it out favorably!

Thank you!