

Tiffany Applegate, Proponent  
HB 2311  
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Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Hi, my name is Tiffany Applegate, and I am honored to be an adoptive mother. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today in support of House Bill 2311.

I have been intimately involved with foster care and adoption for over 20 years. We have 3 adopted children, and it has been one of the greatest blessings of our lives to raise them and our other children. I can't imagine if that opportunity had been taken from us, simply because of our religious beliefs, specifically regarding sexuality and marriage.

According to Bipartisanpolicy.org, over 65% of foster families attend church services weekly. Research (Barna) shows that practicing Christians are twice as likely to foster or adopt than the general population and are more likely to welcome sibling groups, older youth, and children with special needs. These are the children that are hardest to place and it's the people of faith that are most likely to step up and meet this need.

These are families, like ours, that believe we are called to care for the orphan and the widow, even if it's hard. Families that are following the call of Christ to lay down our lives, pick up our cross, and follow Him. That means we step in the gap, love these children, and we help them heal. And our biblical view of marriage and sexuality does nothing to impede this calling.

Let's look at the statistics and the cost of excluding Christian families simply for their religious beliefs. There are close to 6,000 children in the foster care system in KS at any given time, and according to reports, there are less than 2,500 licensed foster homes. That means there are children that have been rescued, are hurting, and have nowhere to go. They are sleeping in offices, hotel rooms, or are being left in dangerous situations.

Now imagine if 65% of our KS foster families are Christian and are no longer allowed to receive placements or adopt because of their beliefs. That means we will only have approximately 875 families left to serve the almost 6,000 children in care. Can you imagine if it was your child that was scared, alone, and with no safe bed to sleep in? Can you imagine them sleeping on the floor of a social worker's office or in a hotel room? We already have a shortage of families and as I mentioned, research shows that Christians are twice as likely to foster and adopt. So why in the world would we do anything to exacerbate the problem even more?

We need to find a solution for this shortage and help these kids, but it's not by eliminating good families through religious discrimination. If we allow families to be denied placement for their strongly held religious beliefs, these precious children are the ones that will pay

the price. So I'm asking you to support HB2311 and protect foster and adoptive families from religious discrimination. Thank you.