

Written testimony
January 30, 2022

Chairman Hilderbrand and Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee Members:

I am a proponent of Senate Bill 276.

My name is Susan Stanzel. I am the mother of three grown women: Loretta Stanzel 41, Virginia Stanzel 37, and Crystal Jensen 35.

My life as a mother began very normally, despite my blindness. Neither Loretta nor I knew what breast feeding was all about, but it didn't take long. We spent three lovely months together before I returned to work as an Information Technology Specialist, otherwise known as a computer programmer for the United States Department of Agriculture. I subsequently gave birth to two more girls and returned to work after a few months spent at home with each one.

The first question you might have is how I knew where my baby was. My friends put bells on their babies. I joined the disposable diaper revolution, so I could hear the crackle of the plastic diaper. I was also very diligent about baby proofing the house. We had one steadfast rule: if I found a toy on the stairs, it disappeared.

There were challenges as any parent might experience. My middle child, Virginia, was diagnosed with ADHD. She wanted to hide from me in racks of clothes during shopping expeditions, so I attached her to me with tether for safety. We fought through normal problems of school, homework, and cleaning of bedrooms. Yet, my children grew up to become functioning members of society.

Last winter during the pandemic, Crystal, my youngest daughter trusted me to care for her four-year-old girl and her two-year-old boy each week from Tuesday morning until Thursday evening. I am now widowed, so Crystal's trust in my ability to care for and love my grandchildren while alone is one of the highest compliments I could receive. I'm happy to report that neither grandchild wore a bell, my grandson was in cloth diapers, we didn't need to be tethered together, and we all had a great safe time.

I am asking you to support SB 276 assuring that blind parents will not lose their children and blind people who want to adopt not be blocked based on blindness.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Stanzel
Leawood, Johnson County, Kansas
Senate district 11