

# Kansas Enacts Law Clarifying Childhood Independence Is Not Neglect

*Kansas becomes the 13th state to protect parents who let kids play, walk, and gain independence without fear of neglect claims.*

NEW YORK, UT, UNITED STATES, May 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Kansas recently became the nation's 13th state to enact a "Reasonable Childhood Independence" law.

Previously, Kansas parents worried they could be investigated simply for letting their kids walk or play outside.

Senate Bill 408 was championed by Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi (Republican, District 26), with Senate conferee, Sen. Ethan Corson (Democrat, District 7), and passed out of both the Senate and House unanimously before being signed into law by Gov. Laura Kelly (D) on April 9, 2026.

The new law states that "neglect" is when you put your child in serious and obvious danger – not anytime you take your eyes off them.

Parents in Kansas can breathe easier knowing that they can let their kids out of their sight without fearing a police or child protective investigation anytime a neighbor or bureaucrat dreams up a far-fetched peril.

This is great news for parents like Shaley Knickerbocker. Eighteen months ago, Knickerbocker and her husband were living in Baldwin City, Kansas – population about 5,000 – when they let their kids, 8, 6 and 4, go outside to play one morning. Knickerbocker could see them from her window. That evening, a police officer knocked on their door: He'd gotten a report that some



Let Grow's mission is to make it "easy, normal and legal" to give kids back some independence.

children had been playing outside unsupervised.

While there were no charges filed, Knickerbocker found the incident deeply disturbing. A few months later, she received a second visit from the police when she let her son, 6, walk three blocks home from the park to go to the bathroom. Again, there was no official report made, but at that point, she and her husband had had enough: They moved to the countryside, away from prying eyes, dialing fingers, and authorities with badges.

Kansas supporters testifying for the bill included Tanya Keys, Deputy Secretary of the Kansas Department of Children and Families, who told the legislators that this policy aligns with their efforts to distinguish poverty from neglect, to give guidance to its workers, and to educate the larger community about when to report.

Lenore Skenazy, president of [Let Grow](#), the nonprofit promoting childhood independence, submitted testimony noting that as kids' independence has been going down over the decades, their anxiety and depression have been going up. A Reasonable Childhood Independence bill ensures that parents don't have to second-guess themselves when they feel their kids are ready to play outside, run an errand, or walk to a friend's house.

Like the 12 states that preceded Kansas in passing similar bills, the Kansas law was supported by groups across the political spectrum, from parents' rights and conservative women's groups, to anti-poverty and racial justice advocates. Let Grow helped coordinate these advocacy efforts.

Experts including Let Grow co-founders Jonathan Haidt and Peter Gray also submitted testimony highlighting the importance of childhood independence, responsibility and free play as antidotes for the anxious generation.

Let Grow's overall aim is to make it "easy, normal, and legal to give kids back some independence."

Utah was the first state to pass a Reasonable Childhood Independence law in 2018 followed by Texas (2021), Oklahoma (2021), Colorado (2022), Connecticut (2023), Illinois (2023), Montana (2023), Virginia (2023), Florida (2025), Georgia (2025), Missouri (2025), Indiana (2026). Says Let Grow's legal consultant Diane Redleaf, "There is strong momentum growing across the country that pushes back against the belief that whenever parents allow their children out of their sight, they are endangering them."

Similar legislative proposals are currently pending in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont.

After the Kansas bill passed, Knickerbocker wrote to Let Grow saying, "I've had a few moms in the area reach out saying they've had similar experiences [to hers] and they're grateful for a law now!"

About Let Grow

Founded by Lenore Skenazy, Jonathan Haidt, Peter Gray, and Daniel Shuchman, Let Grow is a

nonprofit dedicated to promoting childhood independence. Through free school programs, community initiatives, and advocacy, Let Grow makes it easy, normal, and legal to give kids back the independence they need to grow into capable and confident adults.

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