

Dear :

I am a parent/professional/grandparent who lives in _____ and I am writing to ask you to consider taking on a leadership role as a potential sponsor of legislation that will make it easier, more normal and yes, legal! to give children reasonable independence.

Why do children need reasonable independence? Because school-aged children every day are stopped from [playing in parks](#), [staying home alone](#), or even [being in their own front or backyards](#), when their parents have made the sound judgment that they are ready and able to have this degree of freedom ([which is good for kids!](#)). Our [“surveillance society”](#) has led to constant fear that children can never be alone, at increasingly older ages. Parents increasingly fear their children will be kidnapped or molested if they leave parents’ line of sight, [when crime rates have been going down since the 1990’s](#) and remain at historically low levels (even with recent reports of spikes during the pandemic). As a result, children’s freedom has been under assault and with it has come increasing [childhood mental health issues](#) because children are deprived of the most meaningful ways of developing their own skills and resilience.

This is an especial concern in our state because:

The results of overly-[broad neglect laws](#), coupled with power of caseworkers and police to label reasonable parenting decisions neglect despite the parent’s good judgment, have resulted in a new generation of children and families who live in fear that allowing their children to have normal play will leave them open to being punished or labeled as a child neglecter.

The good news, as [this article discusses](#), is three states now guarantee the right of reasonable independence to children. And one of those states is a big one—Texas! And the law that passed in [Oklahoma this May](#) is viewed by the national non-profit Let Grow as a new model (see language in Attachment 1).

I have been in contact with Let Grow, the organization that has [written and spoken extensively about](#) the need for these laws. Their President Lenory Skenazy is the person who sparked the movement [Free Range Kids](#). Let Grow is interested in working with legislators in every state to see reasonable independence laws pass to protect common sense parenting. So if you are able to sponsor legislation in _____, Let Grow would be available to help us with resources, testimony in support, suggested bill language, and other tools to help get the legislation passed. Indeed, Let Grow has prepared a whole toolkit available here: <https://letgrow.org/legislative-toolkit> in case you want more information.

May we find a time to talk further with you about your possible interest in becoming one of our legislative champions for reasonable independence for children? I will be reaching out next week to your assistant to seek a time for a call.

Thank you for your interest in Reasonable Independence for Children legislation in

Your truly,

Phone:
Email:

Attachment I: Oklahoma Model Law Provisions (House Bill 2565, signed into law on May 3, 2021 (amending Oklahoma Children's Code)(underlined language is newly enacted language)>

Evidence of material, educational or cultural disadvantage as compared to other children shall not be sufficient to prove that a child is deprived; the state shall prove that the child is deprived as defined pursuant to this title.

Neglect" means: ... (c) supervision or appropriate caretakers to protect the child from harm or threatened harm of which any reasonable and prudent person responsible for the child's health, safety or welfare would be aware, or

(d) special care made necessary for the child's health and safety by the physical or mental condition of the child."

"Neglect" shall not mean a child who engages in independent activities, except if the person responsible for the child's health, safety or welfare willfully disregards any harm or threatened harm to the child, given the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities. Such independent activities include but are not limited to:

- (1) traveling to and from school, including by walking, running bicycling,
- (2) traveling to and from nearby commercial or recreational facilities,
- (3) engaging in outdoor play,
- (4) remaining at home unattended for a reasonable amount of time,
- (5) remaining in a vehicle if the temperature inside the vehicle is not or will not become dangerously hot or cold, except under the conditions described in Section 11-1119 of Title 47 of the Oklahoma Statutes, or
- (6) engaging in similar activities alone or with other children.