



**Kansas Association of
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**Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee
In Support of HB2557
March 7, 2024**

Chair Warren and Committee Members:

The mental health of our first responders is of great importance to their ability to perform their duties and to the retention of the first responder for continued service to their communities. Peer support is a large and successful tool to provide support to our first responders. Through peer support services, many of our first responders are willing to come forward to seek help in dealing with traumatic stress and many other mental health issues, among other life events, not always precipitated by a duty-related activity.

Our associations requested this bill to address concerns voiced to us from our Peer Support teams on the limitations in the current statute applying the confidentiality provisions of Peer Support Counseling to only needs resulting from an identifiable duty related activity. It is our desire to expand the confidentiality to other assistance being sought by our employees.

We want you to be aware of provisions in the current statute that remain unchanged in the bill allowing certain information to not be protected by confidentiality. You can see those in the bill on page 3, lines 13-32.

We have come a long way in the past few years to make our first responders feel that asking for help is okay and not a detriment to their career. But we have a long way to go. We believe this bill will enhance the gains already made on these issues. We ask for your support by moving the bill forward favorably.

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