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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 150: AN ACT concerning victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking or stalking; relating to housing protections; notification requirements.

To: Honorable Chairman Rick Wilborn
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Thomas Hongslo, Police Chief
City of Lenexa

Detective Shannon Leeper, Special Victims Unit
City of Lenexa

Please acknowledge this testimony as support of Senate Bill 150.

Domestic Violence and related criminal offenses are a significant problem in the City of Lenexa. The Lenexa Police Department has seen a consistent increase in reported incidents of domestic violence. The increase in reported incidents has also shown an increase in the amount of physical violence perpetrated by the suspect. This includes a rise in domestic violence related aggravated battery which in many cases includes strangulation.

The Lenexa Police Department and area support agencies work extensively to ensure that the victims receive the services they need which include safety planning. However, there is a limit to the service protection that we can provide. In most instances, the suspect knows where the victim resides and the victim is terrified of the suspect returning to inflict additional harm.

The Lenexa Police Department has worked previously with victims who wished to relocate from a rental property but could not due to the extensive cost. In late 2018, a female in Lenexa was the victim of domestic violence where the suspect cut his own throat. The suspect was charged with a criminal offense and the victim obtained an order of protection of the District Court. The victim wished to move residences due to her fear of the suspect. The apartment complex where she resided would not allow her to break her lease without a substantial cost. They only offered to move her to a one-bedroom apartment but continue to pay the rent of a two-bedroom apartment.

Attached is a statement from the victim of the above incident.

We believe that SB 150 will allow victims of domestic violence and other related offenses to relocate without cost so they remain safe from their abuser. Not allowing a victim to break a rental lease without substantial cost re-victimizes them and substantially increases their chances of being seriously harmed.

My name is Deepal Patel. I am a female pastry chef, scientist, small business owner and survivor of domestic violence. A violent attack by my husband on Monday, November 5, 2018 left me terrified, in danger and unsheltered. I was homeless. Unable to remain in my home – the scene of my attack, I took refuge in a motel. Having quit my job just months before to start my new business, I had limited time and funds to find a new place, a safe place. Almost daily, I called and visited my landlord to discuss my “options” to find a home. I expected help because I had been a model tenant. I paid rent in full, on time, every month without complaint. My landlord, despite being presented with video footage from another tenant of the attack, an order of protection from the country court, and several requests from the local police department, gave me choices that were not options at all.

First, I could stay in the home where I was not safe. Where I had been attacked. Where I could see the visible physical evidence of the attacks and relive the event. Where I would relive the trauma. I would pay the rent I was paying alone now and live with the fear that my abuser had knowledge of my life, schedule and access to the home.

The second option was for me to pay a \$300 dollar transfer fee and an additional \$500/month to move to a replica of my apartment within the same complex. In this case, I would be responsible for the new and old lease, paying for both their rents and bills. Alternatively, if I agreed to allow my husband to live at the old home he would bear the responsibility of the old lease. I was being extorted. He would easily identify my home using the knowledge of my schedule and by identifying my vehicle.

The third option presented to me was to buy out the lease. Continue paying rent for 30 days. Then, provide 2 months of rent to void the lease as well as any more rent that would accumulate as a result of my husband delaying to sign the lease release agreement. He took full advantage of the opportunity he had to control me and delayed signing the lease into mid-December.

None of these were real options. None of the options were safe nor were they affordable. Worst of all they gave my abuser power and control to continue victimizing me when I was fighting to get away. They gave him the same power to control over where I lived, the little money I had and the control to remain within proximity of me just as he had during our marriage.

Victims of domestic violence, like myself, seek desperately to be safe in their home, free of their abuser. My apartment community and my landlord betrayed me, and I was denied my safety long after my attack. Passing this bill could save lives, provide safety and shelter to women who are brave enough to leave.