

HB 2525
House Committee on Children and Seniors
Proponent Testimony
January 31, 2022

Chairperson Concannon and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a statewide non-profit organization whose membership is the 25 sexual and domestic violence programs serving victims across Kansas. KCSDV provides information, training, and analysis on issues impacting victims of domestic and sexual violence, their families, and their communities. Our members, the local advocacy programs, are committed to providing quality services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, empowering victims to live independently without the ongoing fear of violence, and helping victims secure the resources necessary for a safe and healthy future.

KCSDV supports the passage of HB 2525. The most important components of this bill to domestic and sexual violence victims in Kansas are:

- **Removing the requirement to comply with child support enforcement to apply for SNAP and childcare assistance;**
 - Kansas is among the few states that continue to have this provision, as it is not required under federal law for these two programs. This requirement has a chilling effect on participation, especially for victims of domestic & sexual violence. There are good reasons why it might not be in a family's best interest to pursue child support. This action could force a protective parent to put their family in danger. Many victim-parents do not believe they can trust the system to maintain their family's safety and protect their children. While there is a process for applicants to share why child support enforcement could endanger them or their children, the presence of the question continues to serve as a deterrent.
- **Removing the minimum work requirement for adults attending private or public K-12 education or postsecondary institutions; and,**
- **Removing the lifetime limit for childcare assistance for adults attending postsecondary institutions (currently at 24 months).**

We know that the most dangerous time for victims is when they choose to leave the abusive relationship. Violence and abuse often escalate significantly during this time. This time is also the most fraught financially for victims. Financial abuse is one of the most insidious types of abuse for victims, in that it creates one of the biggest hurdles for victims attempting to leave their abuser. Years of isolation and minimal access to shared financial resources often put victims in the position of having to choose between impoverished safety or financial security that comes attached to an abusive partner.

When victims leave abusive relationships and seek independence, they often require intensive safety planning with a trained advocate. At the same time as the safety planning, the victim is most often facing a harsh reality put in place by the rules and regulations of the systems that purport to function as “assistance” or “help” for those facing the most difficult times of their lives. Many times, instead of help and assistance, victims are faced with compliance requirements that could jeopardize their safety along with limitations on improving their education and training in hopes of obtaining a living wage and meaningful employment.

Domestic violence and sexual assault victims often need to rely on these safety net services during the time period after leaving abusive partners along with securing an employment opportunity that will allow for victims to properly, effectively, and sustainably care for themselves and/or their children.

Because these resources can be life-changing for so many victims of domestic and sexual violence, **KCSDV strongly supports the passage of HB 2525.**

Sincerely submitted on behalf of KCSDV,

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