The Kansas Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association of America supports the passage of HB2243 to amend K.S.A. 38-2230. Protection of children is one of the fundamental responsibilities of society. In the event children are endangered, authorities must step in to protect children from danger.

Speaking as a military veteran of 34 years of active service and more recently as placement for two children in need of care in Kansas, I am familiar with the services of the Kansas Department of Children and Families to promote safety for children. I am also familiar with Military Family Advocacy.

In the 1990s while stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base Missouri as a squadron commander, I requested assistance from the base military family advocacy office on behalf of one of my Airmen. His young daughters lived off base were repeatedly absent or tardy from elementary school. The Airman was divorced and his ex-spouse with physical custody was reportedly abusing alcohol. Once I learned of this situation I made one phone call. A social worker at military family advocacy notified the Missouri child protection authorities. The response was impressively swift and effective. My Airman and more importantly his daughters were immediately provided support to address the problem. The ex-spouse was offered help as well for her substance abuse problem. The Airman returned to my office a few days later and was extremely grateful for the actions of all concerned.

Missouri and the United States Air Force had an effective working relationship and were able to move swiftly once notified. I believe this bill would help create a similar relationship among Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, McConnell Air Force Base and the Kansas DCF.

You are scheduled to hear on the need for this bill through video testimony from a Department of War official affiliated with the Pentagon's Defense-State Liaison Office. The military community supports children and families of service members stationed around the globe. I am told Pentagon officials want this bill. Their oversight of military family matters has informed them of the need for this bill in Kansas and companion bills in many other states.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this bill so it may be considered by the House and eventually become law in our state.

In the future, when asked if you support the troops, you can report with pride your "Aye" vote on this bill as a key step in supporting the troops by supporting their family members.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Kelly
President and State Legislative Lead
Kansas Council of Chapters