Madame Chair Susan Humphries and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lorrie Beck and I'm testifying as a proponent of HB 2536: Requiring Dementia Training for Guardians (Kansas Guardianship Program (KGP).

As a former caregiver for my mother who had Alzheimer's Disease and a volunteer Community Educator with the Alzheimer's Association, I believe I can speak to the need that would require KGP volunteers receive training that ensures the health, safety, welfare, and rights of adults who have been deemed to be impaired by age illness, or disability (including dementia).

The Kansas Guardianship Program (KGP) office does not currently provide or require dementia training for their volunteers. Legislation is needed to protect those with cognitive decline who are assigned a guardian by the court.

The Kansas Guardianship Program provides court-appointed volunteer guardians or conservators when an adult has been deemed by the court to be impaired by age, illness, or disability" – which includes dementia – and lacks appropriate family or financial resources to care for them. The KGP volunteers handle personal care, health and safety decisions, and they are legally responsible for decisions about the ward's well-being. If needed, the KGP volunteers manage finances and property.

The Kansas Guardianship Program has more than 775 volunteers in Kansas serving 1,285 individuals, some of whom have some form of cognitive decline or dementia.

Training courses that are available from the Alzheimer's Association will help KGP volunteers:
* Recognize the common warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias;
* Understand how Alzheimer's disease and dementia affect communication;
* Understand complex behaviors caused by Alzheimer's disease and dementia;
* Identify neglect and possible elder abuse;
* Recognize potential safety risks for individuals living with dementia; and
* Identify appropriate techniques to communicate with individuals living with dementia.

I've taught these classes to businesses and non-profit organizations, and those simply interested in knowing more about Alzheimer's disease and all forms of dementia.

I retired early so I could care for Mom in my home, which I did for nearly 5 years before her behaviors changed due to Alzheimer's disease. My sister and I placed Mom in an Assisted Living Memory Care facility where staff received training on how to deal with residents with Alzheimer's disease. Staff were well versed on how to keep the residents calm, engaged, safe, and they treated the residents with the love and respect due these seniors.

There is no additional cost for these training courses. There is free training available online by the Alzheimer's Association, so there is no fiscal note attached to HB 2536.

I urge you to support HB 2536. Thank you for your time.
Lorrie Beck