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Madam Chair,

I have come before you today to further explain my opposition to bill 2480 regarding a carve-out of the Mandated Reporter Statute.

I would like to share with my esteemed colleagues and the proponents here some of my background and why the safety and protection of children and the most vulnerable is so important to me. I graduated from MidAmerica Nazarene University in 2007 and one of my majors of study was Urban Studies which has very similar coursework to undergrad social work degrees, in fact, for one of my practicums I spent the summer of 2004 in Los Angeles at the SAY YES Center (an afterschool educational program) at 6th and San Pedro in Skid Row. Working with children throughout the day and then taking them to the Midnight Mission Parking Lot for them to have cots to sleep on was, in a word, formative.

After that experience I was the first volunteer in January of 2005 at the brand-new KC Urban Youth Center, an afterschool program started to help at-risk-youth with literacy and homework. I became an employee when they received grants to hire care facilitators and worked there for several years, eventually becoming their Nutritional Director. And while both experiences have had profound impact on my life, they by themselves would not have had me object so strongly to house bill 2480.

From November 2014 to July 2021, I worked at a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility. I was hired as a Maintenance Tech, became the End User Specialist for the new in house IT Team in February of 2015 and eventually became a member of the donor relations team. Throughout my time at the PRFT I obtained the necessary certifications to work 'on the floor' to help out when the organization was short-staffed and more workers were needed to maintain safety ratios (especially around the holidays so the frontline staff could spend time with family).

My experience “working on the floor” with those children and youth are why I cannot in good conscience support this bill. One story of a child I worked with comes to mind. When this young girl came to the PRTF she was immediately put on the most restrictive safety protocols because of the type of self-harm she was enacting. This child had been sexually abused and would put items in her vaginal canal and anus. In order to work through this therapeutically, her care team had a strict protocol of what she was allowed to wear and every time she left a room, she was

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subjected to pocket checks and shoe checks to make sure she was not storing items that could be inserted into her vaginal canal.

(This by no means was the only child that had been sexually abused that displayed this behavior she simply the one that comes to mind because of the severity of her case and length of her treatment plan). In a psychiatric treatment facility when a client is hurting themselves or harming another, they are put in a safety hold until de-escalation is possible. The amount of safety holds this client went through at the beginning of her treatment plan and throughout her care plan were many, she was required to have a 1-1 care ratio because of the severity of her needs. She made great strides during her time and was able to have less restrictive protocols as she improved.

The fact that mandated reporters may hear about the abuse of children and not be able to verify the wellbeing of the child is quite frankly beyond the pale, the welfare of children should never be superseded by the holistic defense of abusers.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Bohi

KS HOUSE DISTRICT 15