Opponent Written-Only Testimony on HB 2480

Submitted by: Lucy McIntyre, MSW

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written-only testimony in opposition to **HB 2480**.

I am a master's level social worker practicing in Kansas for the past seven years. The majority of my career has been dedicated to macro social work, working in programs that serve children and families. Most notably, from August 2019 to June 2022, I held multiple roles at Cornerstones of Care, supporting children and families as they entered the foster care system. I currently serve as the BSW Program Director at The University of Saint Mary, dedicated to educating and mentoring young adults as they prepare to enter the field of social work. In addition to my professional background, I was a foster parent for over 4 years and have adopted 9 children. I submit this testimony in my individual capacity, grounded in my professional training, ethical obligations, and experience working with children, families, and vulnerable adults.

HB 2480 creates a broad exception to Kansas' mandatory reporting framework by allowing licensed social workers working under the supervision of an attorney to withhold reports of suspected abuse or neglect when that information arises "solely in the course" of legal representation or consultation.

Mandatory reporting laws exist to ensure early detection of abuse and neglect and to protect individuals who may not otherwise be able to protect themselves. Creating profession-specific carve-outs—particularly for licensed professionals who routinely work with vulnerable populations—introduces risk and uncertainty into a system designed to prioritize safety above all else.

Social workers, licensed or not, are governed by a professional code of ethics that places the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults as a paramount obligation. If there are social workers willing to compromise that, I would question their commitment to the underlying core values of safety and well-being for vulnerable populations. HB 2480 places social workers in a direct ethical conflict by requiring them to subordinate those duties to attorney-client privilege, even when credible concerns of harm are present.

This bill effectively asks social workers to choose between:

- Their ethical and professional obligation to protect vulnerable individuals, and
- A legal directive that limits their ability to act on reasonable suspicion of harm.

This is not a position Kansas should place social workers in.

In practice, social workers embedded in legal settings often serve as the first or only professional to hear disclosures of abuse or neglect. HB 2480 could:

- Delay intervention in situations where time is critical;
- Create ambiguity about when reporting is allowed versus prohibited;
- Reduce clarity for multidisciplinary teams working to ensure child and adult safety; and
- Undermine public trust in social workers as mandated reporters.

Once reporting discretion is expanded in one professional context, it becomes difficult to draw clear lines elsewhere, weakening the overall integrity of the mandatory reporting system.

Kansas law already contains confidentiality provisions and legal protections that appropriately balance privacy, privilege, and safety. The current framework ensures that:

- Reports made in good faith are protected from liability; and
- Confidentiality does not override the duty to report suspected harm.

HB 2480 shifts that balance too far away from prevention and protection.

Kansas has long recognized that protecting children, elders, and vulnerable adults requires **clear, consistent, and universal reporting obligations**. HB 2480 introduces unnecessary exceptions that risk delaying intervention and undermining social workers' ability to act ethically and effectively.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **oppose HB 2480**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
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