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House Judiciary Committee
January 28, 2026
House Bill 2480

Proponent Testimony of
Mackenzie Boltz, MSW

Chair Humphries, Vice-Chair Williams, Members of the Committee, and Legislative Staff:

My name is Mackenzie Boltz. I am a Mitigation Specialist with BIDS' Death Penalty Defense Unit in Topeka. I have a Master degree in Social Work and have been working in the public defender space for almost four years. I am writing in support of HB 2480, which would create an exception to certain mandatory reporting obligations for licensed social workers when working under the supervision of an attorney and uphold attorney-client privilege while working under the supervision of such attorney.

In my role as a mitigation specialist, I have had various responsibilities with the overall goal of assisting a client in their defense. This often includes looking at the whole person and understanding the context of a crime. As a trained social worker, I call on my learned skills daily in order to better assist and aid in representing a client. In death penalty defense, I have relied on my training as a social worker to uphold the American Bar Association standards for death penalty defense, which include a recommendation that the defense team contain at least one member qualified by training and experience to screen individuals for the presence of mental or psychological disorders or impairments.[1] In my duties, I have helped connect clients to substance use treatment, mental health care, employment services, and court-ordered services, assisted in maintaining stable housing, produced written sentencing advocacy, and interviewed countless clients and their friends and family.

As a social worker on a legal team, I rely on rapport and advocacy. Mitigation is often a key component to a legal case. Listening to the stories of a client and loved ones often involves learning sensitive information, some of which can interfere with our ethical duties as a social worker. Due to mandatory reporting obligations, there is often a conflict between licensing duties and legal team confidentiality. House Bill 2480 would allow social workers to work under the purview of the attorney, allowing exceptions to mandatory reporting which, in turn, will allow

[1] American Bar Association, Death Penalty Representation Project, 2003 Guidelines. Accessed at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/committees/death_penalty_representation/resources/aba_guidelines/2003-guidelines/2003-guideline-4-1/ on January 27, 2026.

social workers on a legal team to fully represent their clients without fear of losing licensure. It will provide comfort and confidentiality to clients and witnesses, which is essential to effective representation.

The passage of HB 2480 would allow social workers like me to fully operate under a legal team without fear of ethical conflict. It would allow unlicensed social workers, like me, the confidence and protection to obtain (or reobtain, for those whose licenses have lapsed due to this fear) social work licensure. Licensure ensures continued education, updated practices, and overall better equipped social workers. With the passage of HB 2480, there could be an increase in licensed social workers within criminal defense; this would help implement holistic defense and change the direction of the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Sincerely,

Mackenzie Boltz, MSW
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Kansas State Board of Indigents' Defense Services
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