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House Judiciary Committee
January 28, 2026
House Bill 2480

Proponent Testimony of
Elizabeth Day, LMSW

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

My name is Elizabeth Day. I am a mitigation specialist at BIDS' 7th Judicial District Public Defender Office in Lawrence, having served in this capacity since this office opened in 2023. I have been a licensed social worker in Kansas for 25 years.

Our BIDS clients deserve nuanced and sophisticated legal representation as they face the myriad challenges before them. All too often, their personal histories are marred by intergenerational poverty, interrupted educational goals, substance abuse challenges, long-term childhood placement in State's custody and unstable or frequently violent upbringings. Of course, this is not true all of the time. However, NEVER do our clients live in social vacuums, completely insulated from hardship and personal pain. They present to BIDS attorneys and staff with complicated and numerous needs. These needs will be better met by the passage of House Bill 2480 because passage will lower barriers between clients and Mitigation Specialists who are often Licensed Social Workers.

Currently, clients may be reluctant to engage fully with Mitigation Specialists who are Licensed Social Workers, as we are duty-bound by the NASW to inform them of our status as Mandated Reporters. This seems an unnecessary barrier to a well-rounded legal defense. Mitigation Specialists are vital to the defense team. Through my time and effort with clients, the whole defense team gains a well-rounded, more complete picture of our clients, far beyond the discrete details associated with the specific legal case in front of us. This added level of support results in premium legal representation, something all Kansans should want for all of our residents. It also results in better client outcomes, results we also should be committed to achieving.

My work as a Mitigation Specialist at the Lawrence BIDS office is significantly enhanced by my training and experience as a Licensed Social Worker. To my current work I bring honed interviewing skills; deep familiarity with diagnostic materials related to treatment of mental health disorders; professional exposure to addiction treatment options; a wide-ranging understanding of available community resources; and sharp attention to personal and public forces that both shape and challenge our clients. These skills and attributes are available to me because of training related to my Social Work Degree and are strengthened by professional experience at the Kansas Department for Child and Family Services; two foster care contractors; a community mental health center and in hospital emergency

department Care and Treatment assessments. They are strong additions to the expert legal advice and support supplied by BIDS attorneys.

My experience prior to BIDS – at DCF and its foster care contractors – gives me a unique perspective on this bill. If committee members have questions about maintaining protections for children, I want to assure you that the multiple layers of protection already in place will continue, unchanged. School teachers and staff, doctors, nurses, counselors, and therapists are all mandatory reporters. Other supports remain as well, including parents, step-parents, grandparents, other adult family members, foster parents, and friends and parents of friends.

Please know that we are not asking you to do away with protections for children. Kansas has worked long and hard to establish and maintain solid systems for children's safety. What we are asking is that you allow BIDS clients full and committed representation. These two goals are not mutually exclusive.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2480.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Day, LMSW
Mitigation Specialist, 7th Judicial District Public Defender
Kansas State Board of Indigents' Defense Services
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