KANSAS BAR ASSOCIATION

TO: **The Honorable Susan Humphries**
and members of the House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: **Joseph N. Molina,** On Behalf of the Kansas Bar Association

RE: **HB 2480 - Creating an exception to certain mandatory reporting obligations for licensed social workers when working under the supervision of an attorney and permitting an attorney to require a licensed social worker to keep ethical obligations of attorney-client privilege while working under the supervision of such attorney**

DATE: **January 28, 2026**

Madam Chair and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Joseph N. Molina, and I submit this written testimony on behalf of the Kansas Bar Association in support of HB 2480. The KBA supports HB 2480 because it is legislation that makes a narrow, carefully constructed clarification to Kansas law to protect attorney-client privilege when licensed social workers are working under the supervision of an attorney.

Summary of the Bill

HB 2480 ensures that when licensed social workers are integrated into a legal defense team and working under an attorney's supervision, they may be required to maintain the same ethical duty of confidentiality that applies to attorneys. The bill creates a limited exception to mandatory reporting laws only when information is obtained solely in the course of legal representation or during a prospective client's request for representation.

This legislation does not eliminate mandatory reporting. Instead, it preserves the integrity of the attorney-client relationship by aligning the obligations of supervised social workers with well-established principles of attorney-client privilege.

Why This Matters

Modern legal representation often relies on interdisciplinary defense teams. Licensed social workers play a critical role in helping attorneys understand the full context of a client's situation, stabilize clients, and connect them with services.

Without the protections provided by this bill, attorneys face an untenable choice: either forgo the use of trained social workers or risk compromising client confidentiality. That result undermines effective representation and, ultimately, the fair administration of justice.

HB 2480 strikes the right balance. It protects vulnerable clients, maintains public safety safeguards, and ensures that Kansans can speak candidly with their legal teams.

Support for BIDS and Indigent Defense

The Kansas Bar Association appreciates the Legislature's continued support for the Kansas Board of Indigent Defense Services (BIDS**)** and its efforts to strengthen the quality of representation provided to indigent defendants across the state. BIDS and defender offices increasingly rely on interdisciplinary models that include licensed social workers to improve outcomes and efficiency.

HB 2480 directly supports those efforts by providing legal clarity and ethical consistency for attorneys and social workers working together in these settings.

Legislative History

This bill is not new. HB 2480 passed the Kansas Senate during the last legislative session as SB 128. The Senate approved that bill 40-0. This committee held a hearing and recommended that SB 128 be passed. This is the exact bill language from 2025 and it reflects bipartisan recognition of the importance of protecting attorney-client privilege while maintaining Kansas's mandatory reporting framework.

Conclusion

The Kansas Bar Association respectfully urges the House Judiciary Committee to support HB 2480. This bill is narrow, thoughtful, and necessary to ensure effective legal representation, ethical compliance, and continued innovation in Kansas's justice system.

For these reasons, the Kansas Bar Association respectfully urges the Committee to support HB 2480.

On behalf of the Kansas Bar Association, we thank you for your time.

About the Kansas Bar Association:
The Kansas Bar Association (KBA) was founded in 1882 as a voluntary association for dedicated legal professionals. Its more than 5,500 members include lawyers, judges, law students, and paralegals. www.ksbar.org