State of Kansas

TY MASTERSON

Senate President

Proponent Testimony on SB 520

Dear Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 520. At its core, this bill is about protecting the essence of religious liberty, which is the right of Kansans to gather and worship without disruption or intimidation. Regardless of one s political views, most people would agree that a church service is not the place to stage a protest.

As fundamental as this principle may seem, we saw how even it could come under threat earlier this year in Minnesota, when activists protesting ICE entered a church during a Sunday service and disrupted worship. The incident involved high-profile figures, including Don Lemon, and sparked arrests and investigations after congregants ability to worship peacefully was interrupted.

Last week, the Senate passed SB 452, which ensures that law enforcement and other first responders are given protections in Kansas. SB 520 is another bill in that vein, with the goal of ensuring Kansas has the laws in place to hold people accountable who obstruct, intimidate, or threaten individuals participating in a religious service.

It s important to note SB 520 does not limit peaceful speech or lawful protest. What it does address is conduct that crosses the line—physically obstructing services, threatening those in attendance, or intentionally disrupting a religious assembly. By clearly defining these actions and establishing penalties, the bill gives law enforcement and prosecutors a straightforward tool to protect congregants.

Kansas has a long tradition of respecting religious liberty. This bill simply reinforces that tradition by making it clear that what happened in Minnesota will not be tolerated in Kansas. SB 520 ensures that people of every faith can gather, pray, and practice their beliefs without fear of intimidation or interference.

Thank you and I encourage you to forward the bill to the floor favorably.

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