

Testimony in Opposition to SB287

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Thank you for allowing me to discuss my very real concerns surrounding SB287. My name is Stephanie Sanford and I am here today as a Kansas citizen with a disability. First and foremost, I absolutely understand the need for this legislation and fully support its intent. How the bill is written, however, presents very real concerns on the unintended consequences that could result.

My first concern surrounds the definition of "vulnerable". As defined in the bill, anyone over the age of 18 with dementia, intellectual/developmental disabilities (such as autism spectrum) or cognitive impairments is subject to the alert. As written, SB287 requires only that you have one or more of these medically diagnosed conditions. The lack of criteria in terms of justification for requesting the alert is concerning. I have a history of multiple head injuries and experience cognitive impairment. As it stands, simply because of my head injuries I am seen as "vulnerable" and subject to a silver alert. The simple existence of a disability is not justification and sets a very dangerous precedent. More time and refinement are needed before this bill is passed.

My second concern is extremely problematic. Imagine that two people are in a relationship – one is able bodied/the other has an I/DD. Their relationship is not healthy and the individual with I/DD seeks to leave that relationship without telling their partner. They seek support from a close friend and are not in contact with anyone else. SB287 allows the abuser to request that a silver alert be made to locate his partner who he is deeply concerned about. One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when one person is trying to leave. The lethality of that situation escalates to often in the death of the individual trying to leave. Working at the intersection of disability and anti-violence for several decades, I am deeply concerned with how this well-intended legislation can be misused.

I would urge the committee to examine and amend the bill to establish guidelines and criteria for the implementation of the silver alert and develop standards on intake and response that honors and protects the individual with a disability.

Stephanie Sanford

Lawrence, KS