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**Testimony in Support of House Bill 2140
Presented to the House Committee on Education**

**By Special Agent Randy Combs,
Kansas Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator**

February 6, 2025

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2140. The Kansas D.A.R.E. program has been present in Kansas for over 25 years and serves to keep our children on the path to success. In 1999, the legislature established a statewide D.A.R.E. coordinator position, which is appointed and sponsored by the Kansas Attorney General's Office.

As many are aware, D.A.R.E. is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug and violence-free lives. D.A.R.E. stands for **D**rug **A**buse **R**esistance **E**ducation and is an acronym used in the D.A.R.E. decision-making model, **D**efine **A**ssess, **R**espond and **E**valuate. The vision for D.A.R.E. is "A world in which students everywhere are empowered to respect each other and choose to lead lives free from violence, substance use and other dangerous behaviors"

The role of the Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator is to ensure that we have enough certified officers who are trained to teach and provide mentorship to more than 510,000 K-12 students who are learning and growing in our state. Presently, Kansas has 150 certified D.A.R.E. officers who are present and providing D.A.R.E.'s evidence-based curriculum in over 100 school districts across Kansas.

The D.A.R.E. program in Kansas has many times had to shift its work and its messaging to be relevant and well received by the students and schools that it serves. When I became a certified D.A.R.E. Officer in 1998, the biggest threats to our youth were gangs and crystal methamphetamine. Those threats still exist, but presently we have a crisis on our hands in the form of Fentanyl. While some Kansans know that "one pill can kill" many are unaware that Fentanyl is killing children at an alarming rate, right here in Kansas.

Data from the Kansas Child Death Review Board indicates that for children under the age of 18, drug-related deaths have shown a significant increase since 2020. Specifically, Fentanyl-related deaths in 2021 and 2022 were twice as high as in 2020, and 22 times greater compared to 2018 and 2019.

As times evolve, so do the needs of Kansas children and youth. HB 2140 will fund and provide a trained educator to expand D.A.R.E. programs, ensuring Fentanyl awareness and evidence-based curricula are taught to K-12 students statewide. If passed, this legislation will make the D.A.R.E. educator available to all school districts, particularly benefiting underserved and rural areas without access to full-time School Resource Officers or certified D.A.R.E. officers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Randy L. Combs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randy" and last name "Combs" clearly legible.

Special Agent Randy Combs
Kansas Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General