

Date: March 11, 2025

To: Madam Chair Warren and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Judi Rodman, President/CEO, Sunflower House, Child Advocacy Center, Shawnee, KS

Re: Proponent Testimony for S.B. 288

Chair Warren and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Judi Rodman, and I am the President and CEO of Sunflower House, serving Johnson and Wyandotte Counties. As part of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas (CAACKS) network, we address the complex needs of child victims of abuse and their families. We serve children that have experienced sexual or physical abuse, witness violent crimes or been a victim of human trafficking.

Sunflower House sees over 500 children annually due to allegations of abuse. 75% of the children served last year, were victims of sexual abuse. These are Kansas children from Johnson and Wyandotte Counties. 1 in 10 children will be the victims of child sexual abuse by their 18th birthday. Child sexual abuse is the interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer. Sexual abuse can include touching and nontouching. Nontouching behaviors can include voyeurism (trying to look at a child's naked body), exhibitionism, or exposing the child to pornography. [1] Children of all ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds may experience child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse affects girls and boys in all kinds of neighborhoods and communities, even here in Kansas.

99% of the children served last year at Sunflower House knew their alleged offender. Although parents often teach their kids about stranger danger, how many teach their children how to respond if a family member, friend, or trusted adult makes them feel uncomfortable? It is important to understand grooming and manipulative behavior of sex offenders. Not only do they groom and manipulate the children they violate, they groom and manipulate the adults around them so they are able to gain access to children through a trusting relationship with adults.

When there is an arrest of an alleged offender, listen carefully to the words of neighbors and colleagues. You will often hear "We are shocked," "He was so nice," "All of the kids loved her." Many offenders are labeled as a loyal friend, a good employee and a responsible member of the community. [2] This is by design. Grooming, gradually over time, allows the person to build trust and **gain access** to their target **(children)** while avoiding suspicion.

6 out of 10 sex offenders who victimized children had previously served sentences for child sexual abuse. [3] About 1 in 20 perpetrators had prior convictions for offenses specifying a child victim, such as

statutory rape, lewd acts with children, and child abuse. [3] This is why Sunflower House supports SB 288. Registered sex offenders should not be allowed on school grounds. When children attend school, the kids and parents should feel safe and confident that their children are in safe hands. Parents should know that a sex offender will not gain access to their child through their school system.

Child sexual abuse **is preventable. We must empower adults to take responsibility for the safety of children.** We believe that sex offenders should not be allowed on school grounds. SB288 is a step in the right direction for Kansas to prioritize the safety of children.

Thank you for your time, your commitment to the children of Kansas and for your consideration.

Respectfully,



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References

1. *National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). Child Sexual Abuse Resources* Retrieved from <https://www.nctsn.org>
2. *Prevent Child Abuse America. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention.* Retrieved from <https://www.preventabuseamerica.org>
3. *Bureau of Justice Statistics. Child Victimization: Violent Offenders and Their Victims.* Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.ojp.gov>