

## **Written Testimony of Echo Van Meteren**

Leavenworth, Kansas

### **Proponent of SB374**

Senate Judiciary Committee

February 2, 2026

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today as a proponent of SB374, and I respectfully urge you to pass this bill.

Imagine being at work when an Amber Alert suddenly appears on your phone, just like everyone else's in the office. Then you read the name. It is the name of a family member.

Within seconds, your phone is ringing nonstop. People from the community are offering help. Others are asking for information. At the same time, your family springs into action, desperate for answers.

My cousin's two sons were killed. Her daughters were missing. Our family was devastated. Thankfully, the Amber Alert worked. The girls were found alive. But funerals for two young boys soon followed.

Our family had five boy cousins all about the same age, one of them my son, going to school together, trick-or-treating together, playing sports together, just being rambunctious boys. After this act of violence, only three were left to grieve. Innocence was taken.

Childhood was stolen.

When this crime was committed, there was no question who was responsible. We believed the justice system would handle it appropriately. For five years, there was no court hearing.

The man responsible was committed to a state hospital. No one could imagine that he might one day walk free.

And yet, here we are. Because of a loophole in Kansas statute, the person who committed this heinous act could be released, free to walk among us as if nothing has happened.

SB374 must be passed so that no other family is left wondering whether justice will truly be served. No family should live with the fear that a clear act of violence will go unanswered because of a gap in the law.

I respectfully ask you to pass SB374.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Echo Van Meteren

Leavenworth, Kansas