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Wm. Jeff Kahrs, Interim-Acting Secretary

Sam Brownback, Governor

**February 2, 2012**

***Testimony of:***

Wm. Jeff Kahrs, Interim Acting Secretary

***Presented to:***

The Hon. Bob Bethell and Honorable Members  
of the Kansas House Aging and Long Term Care Committee:

**SRS response to HB 2108**

**Chairman Bethell, Vice-Chair Worley, Ranking Member Flaharty and Honored Members:**

Chairman Bethell and Committee members, I am Jeff Kahrs, Interim Acting Secretary for SRS. I understand that on Tuesday your committee heard some disturbing testimony about the Adult Protective Services Program within SRS. I also understand that this committee has some long standing concerns about how this program has been administered. I want to let you know that we share your concerns.

On July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2011 we changed the program director and administrator for this program. We also changed where this program was housed within SRS. (Administratively it had been housed within the Economic and Employment Services division, but in the field it was administered by Children and Family Services division staff, clearly a disconnect.) Our move aligned responsibility for the program both administratively and in the field under the Division of Children and Family Services.

We aligned the program in this fashion because we do believe protecting vulnerable Kansas citizens – adults as well as children and families -- is the primary mission of this division. We also believe that this alignment will bring the accountability and program improvement that is needed. The program is administered by social workers and we believe these duties are best performed by our social workers in the field. We currently have 56 social work staff dedicated to serving vulnerable adults throughout our various SRS offices across the state.

While I understand the reasons for introducing HB 2108, I respectfully oppose this legislation, which would move the entire APS program from SRS to the Attorney General's Office. SRS does not believe such a move would strengthen the state's ability to provide the protection needed by vulnerable adults. We recognize that this decision rests with the Legislature, and will of course support whatever decision is made, but we would ask that you instead work with SRS to improve this program. We do not believe moving the entire program and starting over will help get the needed results in an expedient manner.

SRS began reviewing the way this program functions immediately after the last legislative session. We discovered the systemic problems at APS were even more serious than they originally appeared. These problems did not come about in a year, and it will take longer than that to fix them. We regret this and are committed to reforming this program and making it the best in the nation.

Our Children and Family Services Director Gina Meier-Hummel, will give a detailed over-view of the program, but I stand ready to answer questions.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you, and for your continuing concern for the wellbeing of the vulnerable in our state.