



Kansas Children's Service League

Giving Kids Our Best. For Over 100 Years.

**Testimony to the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
on House Bill 2534**

February 9, 2012

Chair Colloton and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2534. The mission of the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) is "to protect and promote the well-being of children." Kansas Children's Service League is the Kansas chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. In this role, we have worked with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and other state partners such as the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Child Advocacy Centers, and Law Enforcement to produce A Guide to Reporting Child Abuse in Kansas, available at the SRS web site. KCSL also coordinates a statewide Parent Helpline. The largest volume of calls that come into that line involve questions about reporting child abuse and neglect.

According to the Kansas Child Death Review Board, in 2009, 449 Kansas children died. This represents an 11 percent decline in deaths from 2008. Natural deaths remained the cause in the majority of the fatalities, accounting for 321 of the total cases. Of the natural deaths, 58 percent were infants younger than 29 days. Prematurity and congenital conditions accounted for a majority of those deaths. Fatalities from motor vehicle crashes fell to 38 – the lowest number since the Board began keeping statistics – and a 25 percent decrease from 2008. Suicide cases also continued to drop from previous years, with eight in 2009. Homicide deaths increased slightly from 26 in 2008 to 29 in 2009.

The death of any child is incredibly sad, but the act of homicide is tragic, and the failure of any parent, guardian, or caretaker to report a child death or to share with law enforcement full and complete information about any circumstance that could result in a child's death is incomprehensible and unconscionable. We are proponents of the suggested amendments to clarify and strengthen Kansas law for failure to report or falsely report such information. These amendments will help ensure that those who would withhold that information are held accountable for their actions or inactions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony related to the impact of House Bill 2534. We would be happy to provide additional details as requested.

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