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Proponent Testimony to the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
House Bill No. 2583
Deputy Tyler Brooks
Kansas State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police
March 7, 2024

My name is Deputy Tyler Brooks, my testimony today is offered as a member of the Kansas State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police. I have been a Deputy with the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office since 2013.

In 2018, I was fortunate to be selected to join the K9 unit, and in 2022, I achieved the title of unit trainer. I train police K9 handlers and K9 dogs. I can honestly say that I could not imagine a better job than the one I currently have.

In November 2022, I began working with Police Service Dog Bane, a seven-year-old Belgian Malinois, which was given to the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office from the Wichita Police Department after Bane's previous handler, Officer Daniel Gumm, passed away. Officer Gumm was my mentor and a very good friend. To be able to work with Dan's dog was extremely rewarding, challenging, and, above all, sentimental. Dan and Bane, both taught me so much in my short time with them, and I would not be who I am today without them.

We, as handlers, spend more time with our K9 partners than we do with our own families. We spend 8–10 hours a day with these dogs riding around in the backs of our patrol cars. It's easy to see how our partners become more than just a tool for us to use, given how much time we spend with each other. Bane was much more than *just a tool* to me. Bane became part of my family. In fact, Bane helped my oldest son overcome his fear of dogs. Bane's temperament made him easy to acclimate to my family, despite how intimidating he appeared. Bane was a very large dog who had a knack for knocking things over and breaking things in training sessions. It's funny how this incredibly large, clumsy dog is the reason my autistic son is now no longer afraid to be in the same room as a dog. For this, I will be forever grateful to Bane, and I am reminded of him daily when I see my son interact with my new K9 partner.

Police K9 dogs are amazing animals, and they serve our law enforcement departments as an invaluable resource to detect crimes, locate people, and save lives. I have personally been involved in several instances where the deployment of a police dog very well may have saved a



life. One such instance occurred while I was working with Bane in the spring of 2023. An armed suspect was surrounded and stated he was going to force us to shoot him. Bane apprehended and dragged the man away from his weapon, ending the need for lethal force to be used by officers. Many times, we deal with people who cannot think rationally in the moment due to the crisis they are experiencing. Often, these suspects attempt to force us to end their lives by threatening force against us if we attempt to get closer to apprehend them. The example I just offered, Bane and I were personally thanked by the man's family for pulling the suspect away from the knife so that we did not need to use deadly force. That man lived to see another day because of Bane.

On November 16th, 2023, Bane was killed in the line of duty by a fleeing suspect in a sewer drain. Bane fearlessly charged into the tunnel to search for the suspect without hesitation and, unfortunately, succumbed to his injuries that day. The space that Bane was sent into would have been incredibly dangerous for Deputies to search on their own. Although losing Bane was very difficult for me personally, it was even more difficult for my kids. When I returned home that afternoon, I had to sit down with my kids and explain to them that Bane wasn't coming home. I have several photos and mementos of Bane in my house now to remember him because of the outpouring of support from the community during his memorial. Both of my sons see these items and frequently say, "I wish Bane was still here."

I wish Bane was still here as well.

In closing, I hope I have conveyed to you just how important these dogs are to law enforcement and how much they mean to us as handlers. It is my opinion that the current sentencing guidelines for killing or seriously injuring a police animal are not significant enough for the damage that losing one of these amazing animals causes. I ask that you consider Bane's Law and amend the sentencing to prevent this awful act from occurring again.

Thank you for allowing my testimony today and I am pleased to answer questions at the appropriate time.