



**Testimony to the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice  
House Bill 2048 (Erin's Law)**

**February 2, 2017**

Chair Jennings and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2048. As it is currently drafted, the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) will take a neutral position.

While I can appreciate the intent of HB 2048, and always value even small efforts that further the protection of children, this bill raises concerns for unintended consequences and provides no new resources or assurances for improved outcomes for children beyond what is Kansas' current experience. The following are the concerns that prevent us from lending our full support on HB 2048:

- Without providing USD's the resources needed to ensure an evidence based curriculum is being offered and adequate training for teachers and school administrators provided, successful implementation with meaningful outcomes for children is unrealistic. Teachers "in-service" training programs can (and many already do) include a component of child abuse and neglect awareness, recognition, and reporting without additional legislation and mandates.
- Risk of "re-traumatization" to victims who may disclose abuse following or during a teacher led classroom discussion becomes a reality. Suggesting that minimally prepared educational professionals leading and facilitating these discussions have the skills and expertise to respond appropriately is unfair to both the child and the teacher. HB 2048 fails to acknowledge the complexities and sensitivities of this subject matter. This topic is not "easy or simple" to deliver and being prepared to respond appropriately to a disclosure is even more complicated and critical to a child's well-being and any resulting legal processes ensued by the court.
- More than 20% of child sexual abuse victims in Kansas are pre-school age. Attention to the needs and risks of sexual abuse among this age group of children and those adults they are most likely to rely upon and encounter in their daily lives should be considered. As written, HB 2048 would have no impact on this most vulnerable population.



The mission of KCSL is ***“to protect and promote the well-being of children”***. We have operated as a private non-profit 501(c)3 in Kansas for 124 years. Since 1993, we have been the Kansas Chapter of the national organization Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA). As such, we are a recognized expert in Kansas on evidence based services and interventions that prevent child abuse, strengthen families, and empower parents and youth. Over the past four years, we have successfully partnered with the Attorney General on child sexual abuse prevention and awareness education. A training of trainers’ model, known as ***From Darkness to Light*** has proven highly successful in educating adults who routinely interface with children and youth. As a result of this targeted effort improved community awareness of child sexual abuse issues, recognition of symptoms, and reporting requirements in Kansas is being initialized. Additionally, in our role as the Kansas PCAA Chapter, guidebooks for all child abuse/neglect mandated reporters is provided at no cost and informs reporters of their statutorily designated responsibilities.

The Committee may want to consider, as many other States have done, creating a task force to study options and provide recommendations on meaningful ways to improve Kansas’ efforts to educate and inform the public on this important topic. There are many experts in this field who together could create a plan for Kansas, identify the needed public resources, work to secure matching private resources necessary, and develop measurable outcomes regarding awareness, identification, and response of child sexual abuse.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony related to HB 2048 (Erin’s Law). We would be happy to provide additional information as requested.

Presented By,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dona Booe".

Dona Booe  
President/CEO

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***Our Mission: To Protect and Promote the Well-Being of Children***