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Dear Chairman Patton and KS House Judiciary Committee,

Devastating tragedies occur in all communities across the state from terminal illness, natural disasters, accidents, and egregious mistakes. Regardless of the circumstances, the true test of any community is how we handle the tragedy and move forward. In the words of Ellen Engleman Conner, the former Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, "The tragedy of accidents can only be translated to good when future accidents can be prevented, and lives saved. Out of tragedy, good must come."

My name is Sheila Albers and on January 20, 2018, my 17-year-old son John was shot and killed by an Overland Park Police officer. On the night John was killed, my husband and I, with our other two boys, went to have dinner with some extended family. John chose not to come. Shortly after we left the house, John posted suicidal ideation comments on social media. His friends were worried and did the right thing by calling 911.

In the course of a "welfare check" by the Overland Park Police Department, no police car was parked in front of our home and no one attempted even ring the doorbell to make contact with John. However, an officer did position himself behind a tree, gun unholstered, until our garage door began to slowly open. The officer fired his gun 13 times as our son backed our minivan out of the garage in a straight line at 2.5 mph. John was not accused of a crime; he was in mental distress. My son was shot dead less than an hour after we left the house. This tragedy rocked my family, and our community, to its very core.

The lack of transparency in the aftermath of the shooting death of John has been just as devastating. On February 20, 2018 at 9:00 am, my husband and I met with the District Attorney. One month to the day after John was killed, he shared that the shooting was justified and planned to release dashcam video and a media fact sheet during a press conference at 10:30 am that same day. We were given no time to prepare family members or close friends. There was no school on February 20th, so John's friends watched the breaking news in horror with no school counselors or parents available to help them. Instead of communicating clear evidence-based information, the press conference retraumatized the community, raised more questions, and unequivocally eroded the trust between government and its people. It was inhumane.

As parents and constituents, my husband and I find it grossly unacceptable that we have not seen ANY of the material used to clear the officer that shot our son. We have never seen 2 of 4 dashcams, a reconstruction report, a police report, officer involved shooting investigation report or any witness statements. We were offered the same information released to the general public on February 20th. This included a "statement of facts" to support a narrative that was not entirely

factual. Even after a neighbor's doorbell video footage, a reconstruction report from a 3rd party and a ruling from a Federal Judge proved the original media fact sheet was incorrect, there has never been any effort to set the record straight. In the midst of grieving the loss of our son, and making sure our surviving children's needs were being met, I had to contact news directors for every local news station, and several national networks, to have them correct their reporting. Let's be clear, they didn't just take me at my word. I was expected to be transparent and provide them with the documentation to prove that my assertion was correct. In response, every single news station changed their reporting and removed the statements about the officer being directly behind the vehicle. The media stopped using the words "rapidly and aggressively." The discrepancies in reporting were corrected. Corrected by me, not those that originally released the misinformation.

Allowing a summary from law enforcement without having to provide any documentation to support their statements promotes victim blaming. That's not transparency, that is gaslighting. The inaccuracies in the "statement of facts" released by the District Attorney regarding the death of our son exponentially compounded the pain for our family. The lack of transparency allowed those responsible to hide. We have been victimized TWICE!

After any tragedy, communities look for ways to prevent future traumatic events and make positive change. Nothing we will do here today will bring John back. Family, friends and members of the community will grieve his loss for the rest of our lives. However, out of this tragedy some good must come. We need to take the lessons learned from the shooting itself, and the subsequent response, to improve. These lessons can be translated to good if future events can be prevented, lives saved, and community trust rebuilt.

The most important step in making this positive change is transparency. Transparency creates the data and information crucial to writing policy, developing training, and providing exemplary services that best serve the community. Transparency also builds public trust and promotes accountability. This is why WE whole heartedly support HB 2424.

HB 2424 has three distinct pieces that will serve the State of Kansas well. All Kansas citizens should expect to be treated fairly, regardless of zip code. Everyone should expect that:

- All departments have a written policy on the protocol and handling of officer involved shootings
- In the event of a shooting, there would be an independent investigation
- If the local DA/prosecutor determines a shooting is justified, then the investigation becomes public record. Names, addresses, and phone numbers would be redacted.

Without transparency there is no accountability or oversight to guarantee that our government is making decisions in the best interest of the people they have sworn to serve. Kansas is my home. I love this place and most importantly love it's people. That is why I am here today to push for progress. I am humbled and honored to be joined here today with several other families who have suffered the tragic loss of a family member in an officer involved shooting.

These families were all retraumatized by false narratives and/or have been deprived of crucial information. WE ARE ALL HERE TODAY to say that WE ARE BETTER THAN THIS. HB 2424 makes absolutely certain that we serve all Kansans fairly, consistently, and truthfully. When we are transparent, we keep both law enforcement and our citizens safe.