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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 212
Creating a Statewide Kansas Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE)
Coordinator**

**Presented to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary
By Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt**

March 18, 2019

Chairman Wilborn and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 212. This legislative proposal would establish the position of Kansas VINE Program Coordinator within the Office of the Attorney General.

Kansas VINE, Victim Information and Notification Everyday, is a critical resource for many victims in our state, currently providing an automated victim notification system for 80 county jails in Kansas. Through automated technology, Kansas VINE enables victims of crime to get information about their offender's status: most importantly, when their offender is released from jail. Without this knowledge, victims — especially victims of domestic violence or sexual assault — can be extremely vulnerable at time of release of the offender. In Kansas, we have experienced some tragic results when victims have thought their offender was still incarcerated when, in fact, they had already been released. Having the knowledge they will be notified, through text, phone call and/or email, provides some peace of mind and critical safety for the victim while the offender is in jail.

This project grew out of a partnership of the Kansas Department of Labor, the Kansas Sheriff's Association, and the Kansas Attorney General's Office. This partnership allows sheriffs to receive vital national information about who is in jail elsewhere , the Department of Labor obtain vital information about who is in jail and where in Kansas, while also providing victims with vital information as noted. In 2015, the Kansas Department of Labor contracted with Appriss, a national vendor, to develop and install systems to interface with county jail data management programs across Kansas, resulting in our current success of 80 jails online. Along with the success of those efforts, there remains much to be done to ensure the successful implementation of 16 remaining county jails; the ongoing operation of the Kansas VINE program; and ensuring that victims of crime and communities across Kansas are aware and knowledgeable about the safety related benefits of Kansas VINE.

The position of Kansas VINE Program Coordinator plays a crucial role in the successful implementation and long term coordination of this service. The proposal to place this position within the Office of Attorney General and convene an advisory board further strengthens the focus on upholding the rights and needs of victims of crime. Currently the coordination for the Kansas VINE program is conducted through a position funded through the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant, and has other responsibilities. While that approach has worked well to start-up this project, it is now necessary to establish this program as a statutory program and to further explore sustainable funding streams for its continued operations. Senate Bill 212 puts into law the governance structure for Kansas to make the VINE program permanent. Permanent funding will also need to be addressed in the future once the current grant funding expires.

Thank you for your consideration and support for Senate Bill 212.

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