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**Proponent Testimony on HB 2629  
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee  
March 7, 2024**

Chairperson Gossage, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2629 on behalf of the State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) and the Office of the Attorney General.

As a brief overview, the SCDRB was created by the Legislature in 1992 and is administered by the office of the Kansas Attorney General. The Board examines the circumstances surrounding all children under the age of 18 who die in Kansas, whether or not the child is a Kansas resident, as well as the deaths of any Kansas children (when notified) who die in another state. Board membership is established under K.S.A. 22a-243 and currently includes: one member each from the Office of the Attorney General (who serves as Chairperson), the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Department for Children and Families, the Department of Health and Environment, and the Department of Education; three members appointed by the Board of Healing Arts to include a district coroner, a pathologist, and a pediatrician; one representative of a child advocacy group appointed by the Attorney General; and one county or district attorney appointed by the Kansas County and District Attorneys Association.

On average, the Board reviews nearly 400 child deaths per year, which includes an analysis of medical records, law enforcement information, autopsy findings, social service history provided by the Department for Children and Families, school records, mental health records, and a variety of other pertinent information. Through the extensive and comprehensive reviews, the board is able to identify and understand the circumstances regarding the child at the time of their death. Through the analysis of compiled data, the board is able to identify patterns, trends, and risk factors related to the deaths to make recommendations such as modifying statutes, rules and regulations, and policies and procedures that lead to better outcomes for Kansas children.

As amended, HB 2629 will modernize outdated language provided in K.S.A. 22a-242, 22a-243, and 22a-244, as well as codify current practices and notifications as it relates to coroners, the Kansas Department for Health and Environment, and the Department for Children and Families.

In addition to the general “cleanup” of the statute, HB 2629 has two provisions, both of which have a positive impact on board members. The first provision would authorize an additional appointment from the Board of Healing Arts. This will add additional pediatric expertise for the

review of child deaths as well as ensure that overall case assignment is at a manageable level for all appointed members of the Board. The second provision would allow for compensation for Board members to attend meetings, which is consistent with the practices of other state boards and addresses some barriers related to finding suitable appointments with the Board when the interested party lives several hours from the location of the monthly Board meetings.

Lastly, HB 2629 will allow the Board to disclose statistics or conclusions in two additional circumstances. The first being when provided to the governor and legislature to supplement the board's annual report and secondly when those statistics or conclusions are used for the purpose of procuring and maintaining financial grants.

Currently, state statute restricts the SCDRB from disclosing conclusions or statistics outside of the Board's annual report, submitted to the governor and the legislature on or before October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The inclusion of these disclosure provisions will allow the Board to keep our annual report at a manageable length without having to limit the amount of information, statistics, and data we are able to report out. Furthermore, it will allow the SCDRB to meet the federal funding requirements of existing grants as well as ensure competitive applications for future grant opportunities.

The work of the State Child Death Review Board is commendable and needed to ensure that as a state, we are aware and responsive to the risk factors associated with child deaths. As written, House Bill 2629 is an important step in ensuring that the needs of the State Child Death Review Board are met and the work of the Board can continue.

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