

Testimony on SB 360

Written to Senate Judiciary Committee

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Chairman Owens and members of the committee, I am Elizabeth Saadi, PhD, Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Thank you for the opportunity to support Senate Bill 360. KDHE has been a member of the Kansas State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) since its inception. This bill seeks to amend the statutory authority of the SCDRB to allow sharing of information and records for research and public health purposes—while maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of individuals.

KDHE, as the State's public health agency, provides the SCDRB with birth and death records to support the review process. KDHE is committed to efficiently and effectively using information resources to facilitate health improvement. The proposed statutory change will allow uses of SCDRB professional reviews to support public policy and sound decision-making. Under the current statute, use of records and information generated from these reviews is extremely limited.

KDHE's mission is to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans. Many of the agency's programs focus on children's health and, along with our partners, significant achievements have been seen in reducing child mortality and morbidity for our State. However, there is much more to be done.

The death of a child can be one of the most heart-wrenching of events in our society where we are too often asking why it happened. The information and records maintained by the SCDRB can provide considerable insight into the causes and circumstances surrounding child death in Kansas. Public health programs and advocacy initiatives that support reductions in childhood injuries due to motor vehicle accidents and suicides, infant deaths due to vaccine preventable disease such as whooping cough, and infant deaths due to SIDS and parental overlays are examples where information sharing by the SCDRB will be invaluable to evaluating those programs.

KDHE supports its colleagues on the SCDRB in this initiative and has a direct interest in assuring the confidentiality of the individuals maintained in the reviews. In addition, KDHE will provide active input into the development and promulgation of rules and regulations and subsequent policies and procedures surrounding information and records sharing to assure confidentiality is preserved.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these written comments.