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**Testimony to the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee  
Neutral Information on HB2451  
January 27, 2016**

Chairperson Rubin and Committee Members,

Our testimony is for informational purposes regarding the issue of animal control officers being added to the mandated reporters of child and adult abuse or neglect. More specifically the focus is related to some of the statements about training and what constitutes “suspicion” of abuse and neglect which triggers the mandatory report. To be clear, our associations decided we would not support nor oppose HB2451 as presented in the original bill. However we felt compelled to respond to some of the testimony and resulting questions. We also are not weighing in on the suggestions made during the hearing on adding other job classifications, unrelated to our law enforcement agencies, to the list of mandated reporters.

In regards to mandatory training, we oppose statutorily mandated training. We know what our employees need to be trained on to make them effective in applying the law within the statutory and constitutional guidelines, in avoiding personal and agency liability, and interacting with the public on often times very emotional issues. Where we have the greatest opposition when the mandate includes repeating the training on an annual basis, directing us to use one source for the training, or a minimum number of training hours. We also need to have flexibility for the type of training such as classroom, on-line, etc.

Mandated training hours impact our ability to have the personnel on the street answering calls for service or patrolling their communities. We ask consideration of these issues if you consider training mandates as discussed during the hearing.

In regards to the suspicion of abuse issue, one of the ambiguities in this statute is the when the threshold of “suspicion” crossed to mandate reporting. If the expectation is that if animal abuse or neglect exists, that by itself triggers the mandatory requirement to report, that may be overly broad and result in many reports of abuse or neglect coming into an already overburdened system that only detracts from the ability to investigate other more evidence based reports of abuse and neglect.

To be clear, we recognize the need to have evidence of neglect and abuse of any person to be reported to the proper authorities and we recognize the need for training of all personnel in their job duties and the of looking beyond the immediate issue they are investigating. However, we have no information to indicate there has been any lack of reporting of abuse or neglect by animal control officers in Kansas.

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