

CALVIN H. HAYDEN  
SHERIFF



DARYL W. REECE  
UNDERSHERIFF

DUTY HONOR SERVICE

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**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary in Support of HB2557  
March 7, 2024**

Chair Warren, Vice Chair Wilborn, Ranking Member Corson, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing the Johnson County Sheriff's Office to testify in support of this bill.

Our agency has a vibrant and active peer support system in place that is supported by the command staff. I am a trained peer support specialist and have conducted several peer support counseling sessions. These sessions are not always conducted in the confines of an office. Many times, I have gone to a peer's home or met them in a park to discuss whatever issue they need to talk about. These sessions take place at all hours of the day or night.

We are in strong support of the definition of a "peer support counseling session" as defined in the bill on page 1, lines 29 to 34 and page 2, lines 1-4. Very few of the peer support counseling sessions I have been involved with are a direct result of a critical incident. Most concern financial issues, marital issues, or some other difficult life experience that are having an impact on the person requesting counseling. By law, we cannot disclose anything discussed, written, or otherwise conveyed in a peer support counseling session.

The exception to that is if the person being counseled relays information that they may harm themselves or others, or they may have committed a criminal act. A peer support specialist is required to tell a person seeking counselling that our interactions are completely confidential, apart from the two instances I described above.

The concern under current law is that since some of the peer support counseling sessions are conducted for experiences outside of a critical incident the law may not provide the confidentiality of the meeting. Let me make it clear, it is the confidentiality of the meeting that makes peer support counseling so effective. Trust between a peer support counselor and the person seeking counseling is paramount. No information is relayed to anyone else. No supervisor or command staff is contacted. No peer support counselor can be compelled to release information about a counseling session. The person seeking counseling needs to know this is not an option. This bill makes it clear that it is not only critical incidents that can be discussed.

Peer support is a fantastic tool that improves agency efficiency and the mental health of our people. We want to make sure that it continues to be able to function. HB2557 will ensure that this happens.

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We would ask the committee to recommend the bill favorable for passage. Thank for your support.

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