



# Kansas Bureau of Investigation

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Before the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare  
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Chairwoman Gossage and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Jacobs and I serve as the Executive Officer of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI). Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on SB 287, which proposes to expand the Kansas Silver Alert Program.

Section one of SB 287 defines **vulnerable person** as, “*a person who is 18 years of age or older and has dementia, a developmental disability such as autism spectrum disorder or a cognitive impairment*”.

Currently, K.S.A. 75-754 establishes and outlines the purpose and procedures for the Kansas silver alert program. The Kansas Attorney General’s Office has oversight of the silver alert program in collaboration with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI), the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP), local law enforcement and other public and private agencies and organizations. Under the plan, public notice of a missing elderly person may be issued through local law enforcement, news media, and the general public in an effort to locate the individual.

The KBI currently manages the AMBER Alert Program, Blue Alert Program, and the Silver Alert Program.

## **The Amber Alert Program**

This alert is issued after a request by law enforcement is received when there is reason to believe that a child abduction has occurred in their jurisdiction. The alert mobilizes law enforcement, the media, the public, and other resources to assist in the safe recovery of the child. The Amber Alert Program utilizes the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system and the Emergency Alert System (EAS), both of which are authorized through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

## **The Blue Alert Program**

The Blue Alert was authorized through the Kansas Legislature in 2014 with the passage of House Concurrent Resolution HCR 5029. The Blue Alert program is designed to alert the public in an

attempt to apprehend violent criminals who kill or seriously injure law enforcement officers<sup>1</sup>. To date, the KBI has not issued a Blue Alert in Kansas.

### **Silver Alert Program**

The Silver Alert program is managed and controlled by the Kansas Attorney General's office. The Silver Alert protocol creates a voluntary process for coordinating efforts between law enforcement agencies, media outlets, and other entities when a person 65 years of age or older, or a person suffering from dementia, is reported missing by family members or caregivers. The KBI is responsible for any statewide broadcasts of a Silver Alert.

Additionally, upon the request of a law enforcement agency, the KBI is already issuing **Endangered Persons Advisories** in situations where a child or adult, who does not meet the criteria for an Amber or Silver alert, is believed to be in danger.

The Endangered Persons Advisory may be utilized in situations where *children or adults* with autism, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, physical, cognitive, or other developmental disabilities, or mental health concerns go missing.

Like Silver Alerts, Endangered Persons Advisories may be disseminated within local media markets only or statewide as deemed appropriate. These advisories may be initiated directly by the local law enforcement agency, or through the KBI, if requested. Law enforcement routinely engages both the news and print media as well as social media with regard to missing persons in their communities to include: runaway juveniles, vulnerable populations, and when there is a concern for the well-being of an individual. This cooperative effort has been successful and led to the identification and safe return of many people.

The Endangered Person's Advisory option provides law enforcement the discretion often needed when determining the best approach to locating a missing person. For perspective, as of Friday March 17, 2023, there are currently 326 missing adults and 214 missing juveniles in Kansas<sup>2</sup>.

As a caution, when considering changes to K.S.A. 75-754, the legislature should consider the potential consequence of allowing additional applications of these alert systems. A minimizing effect of the alert systems could occur if a significant number of Silver Alerts are issued, and the public becomes desensitized to the additional bulletins and alerts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide informational testimony regarding the current use of the Silver Alert System and the Endangered Persons Advisory in Kansas. The KBI believes the use of the Endangered Persons Advisory is currently accomplishing not only what SB 287 intends to accomplish, but additionally allows law enforcement to notify the public of a missing person with a more broader scope than just individuals who are 18 years or older or those with the specific vulnerabilities as described in the bill.

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<sup>1</sup> [KBI - Kansas Bureau of Investigation - Blue Alert](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Index - Kansas Missing Persons \(ks.gov\)](#)

