



House Appropriations Committee

In Opposition to HB2338

Submitted by SAFEHOME, Inc.

February 27, 2013

Testimony re: PFA Funding for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

Presented by Janee' M. Hanzlick, LMSW, Executive Director

Chairman Rhoades and Members of the Committee:

My name is Janee' Hanzlick, and I am the Executive Director of SAFEHOME, Johnson County's domestic violence agency. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee regarding proposed legislation that will impact PFA funds currently supporting services in Kansas for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Domestic violence is a serious and life-threatening problem in Johnson County, and throughout the state. Each year the Johnson County District Attorney's office files approximately 1,800 domestic violence cases. Domestic violence is deadly. In 2011, of the eleven murders in Johnson County, seven (64%) were domestic homicides. In fact, in 2011, a collaborative Lethality Assessment Program was initiated by the District Attorney's Office, SAFEHOME and Johnson County law enforcement to provide early intervention in situations where the victim is identified as being in life-threatening danger. In the first twelve months of the program, SAFEHOME responded to nearly 700 police-initiated calls from victims whose lives were in danger.

Because of SAFEHOME's participation in the Lethality Assessment Program, we have more people needing safe shelter than we have beds. In 2012, SAFEHOME provided shelter to nearly 300 women and children; answered over 3,000 hotline crisis calls; supported 941 adults and children with therapeutic counseling; and provided legal and court advocacy services to over 1,000 people. In order to save lives, we will house anyone who is in a lethal situation, even when the shelter is full. What this situation means is that nearly every night we have women and children sleeping on mattresses in meeting rooms and in living rooms – just to protect their lives.

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SAFEHOME depends on a variety of sources of funding to continue to meet the public safety needs of citizens in our community. Because most funders, including government funding, accept requests for program support only, SAFEHOME depends on the PFA funds through the Attorney General's Office to support core operating costs, such as administrative functions, that are not funded by other sources.

Over the past five years, SAFEHOME has seen a decrease in our annual PFA funding from \$83,383 in 2008 to \$66,413 in 2013. These funds are critical to supporting SAFEHOME's administrative functions, particularly our finance and grant writing operations.

SAFEHOME has been able to count on receiving this funding each year to cover operating costs that cannot be covered by other sources. If the PFA funds were to be moved into the State General Funds, or provided to the courts, SAFEHOME would no longer be able to count on designated funding for these core operating costs. We could not assume that SGF funding would increase proportionally to the loss of the PFA funds. We would be forced to take funds from programs and direct services to fund critical administrative functions that the agency must have to operate.

I strongly urge this committee to consider the serious implications to victims of domestic violence and to public safety should you move forward with proposed changes to PFA funding. This reliable, designated source of funding is critical to helping SAFEHOME provide services and safety to people in our community.

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