

02.02.17 HB 2048 Morris-Hardeman

Thank you for allowing me to address your committee today. My name is Jayme Morris-Hardeman, and I am the Director of Finance and Advocacy for Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas. We represent twenty-one accredited Children's Advocacy Centers in the state of Kansas, who provide services to more than 4,000 victims of child abuse each year. We are strongly in support of passage and implementation of Erin's Law.

We want to express our gratitude to Representative Jennings for his continued advocacy of this bill and services for victims of child sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse is pervasive in our country. We are uncertain how pervasive, as the majority of victims never report their abuse. Studies show the best estimate is one in ten children will experience sexual abuse before their eighteenth birthday.

We believe Erin's Law will address two issues surrounding sexual abuse – prevention and reporting. Education provided under Erin's Law will provide children with tools to address their own personal safety. More importantly, education under Erin's Law will give children who have been abused with both the words and a safe space to tell a trusted adult what has occurred in their lives and give the adults the tools to appropriately respond to a child's disclosure as well as report the disclosure to child protective services and law enforcement.

Many Children's Advocacy Centers currently partner with their local school districts to provide education to teachers and/or children regarding sexual abuse. Over the next year, we intend to grow this collaboration with our local school districts.

We would ask that you vote for Erin's Law and give children in Kansas the tools they need to keep themselves safe. Thank you.