

Kansas Press Association, Inc.

Dedicated to serving and advancing the interests of Kansas newspapers

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Feb. 18, 2020

To: Rep. Fred Patton, chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Doug Anstaett, consultant and lobbyist, Kansas Press Association

Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 2424

Rep. Patton and members of the Committee:

I am Doug Anstaett, consultant and lobbyist for the Kansas Press Association. I appear today on behalf of approximately 200 daily and non-daily member newspapers across the state.

We are providing written testimony in support of the passage of House Bill 2424, a bill that would significantly improve transparency in incidents when law enforcement officers take action that results in the death of a citizen.

Now, if a district or county attorney finds probable cause that an officer has acted in violation of the laws in Kansas and files charges, many of the records from that incident become known through the judicial process. In those cases, families of victims get much of the information they need, and the information that comes out helps citizens exercise their essential oversight role of law enforcement.

However, when a law enforcement officer is cleared of liability for his or her actions, the families of victims and the public often are left in the dark. They don't know the facts because the vast majority of the records aren't released.

You will hear today from the mother of a victim about just how little information she was able to get following the officer-involved shooting and death of her son. With all due respect to the tough job that law enforcement officers have to do each day, how can this be considered fair or even humane to the family that's left behind? And how can the public judge the performance of those local agencies based on a highly-condensed summary of that decision?

HB 2424 as written is quite clear in its intent; an independent investigation of these incidents is absolutely necessary so that the probe is thorough and not under the control of the department involved. Such a requirement seems to be not only reasonable, but also in the long run in the best interests of the officer and department under scrutiny.

Public trust is critical to our law enforcement community. We believe this bill will increase that trust, so we ask for your support of its passage.