



February 14, 2020

TO: Chairman Fred Patton, House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Ron Keefover, President of the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government
RE: Written Only Proponent Testimony in support of HB 2424

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government is thankful of this opportunity to present testimony supporting legislation that would truly let the sunshine in on the rare but tragic officer involved shootings, which result in a death. HB 2424 indeed would shed light on an area previously unseen by Kansas citizens generally, but by the families of law enforcement officer involved shooting deaths in particular.

HB 2424 in our view does not represent the wholesale opening of investigative records of such matters unless the prosecutor determines no offense occurred during the shooting. However, once a “no charge” decision has been reached, a crying need for all the evidence that obviated the need to file charges is needed for the peace of mind of the deceased family members, as well as the community at-large. It seems to me that if government leaders believe as I firmly do that people fear and mistrust the unknown, HB 2424 would be a welcome enactment that would shine light on the thorough investigations I know from experience are undertaken in these cases.

Indeed, the release of police videos, shooting scene diagrams, narratives of the events as they unfolded and related evidence contained in the follow-up investigative reports will not only build on the excellent credibility most law enforcement agencies across the state enjoy, but will do much to dissuade our citizenry that some departments still hide between the “thin blue line” when it comes to officer involved deaths.

Finally, and just for the Committee’s edification, the Sunshine Coalition for Open Government is a statewide coalition established in 2000. It includes representatives of like-minded non-profit organizations, journalism and law professors, members of the news media and other citizens committed to promoting open government in Kansas.

For the reasons outlined above, the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government urges favorable reporting of HB 2424. I thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

KANSAS SUNSHINE COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT
3770 SW Stonybrook Drive • Topeka, KS 66610
ron.keefover@gmail.com (785) 217-3878