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Written Testimony

Date: February 6, 2019

To: The Honorable Rick Wilborn, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

From: David Johnston, President Kansas Emergency Medical Services Association (KEMSA)

RE: SB 45, Enhanced penalties for offenses causing death or serious bodily injury to public safety sector employees

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 45. My name is Dave Johnston, I am the President of the Kansas Emergency Medical Services Association (KEMSA). I am proud to represent many of the Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics serving in your communities.

Currently the state of Kansas has over 10,000 EMS attendants that provide care in austere environments every day. On a regular basis these providers endure verbal assaults that often escalate to physical intimidation such as being hit and beaten.

Assault of EMS providers is prevalent in Kansas and across the nation as outlined in a survey of 635 providers from 24 states. The survey asked many questions about violence in the EMS workplace. Some of the questions include such questions as, “Have you been physically threatened by a patient?” 97% responded yes. “Have you ever had the patient’s family or bystanders’ spit, kick or hit you?” 41% responded yes. Overall 19% of those surveyed reported a loss in work time due to violence they encountered while rendering care.

Unfortunately I do not have numbers that are specific to the state of Kansas but I can tell you from personal experience that EMS providers regularly face these dangers. In my own experience I have been verbally threatened, shoved, spit at and kicked. From my own EMS agency several paramedics forwarded me their stories of being assaulted.

EMS providers are thrust into dangerous situations daily, but it cannot be accepted that they are going to be assaulted at work or that it is just part of the job. It is essential that proper education and deterrents are in place. EMS providers do receive training on how to deal with dangerous situations. Training includes ensuring scene safety through law enforcement partnerships and how to properly restrain violent patients. KEMSA is committed to ensuring quality education is available to help EMS providers be safer at work.

I request the current bill be amended to include “emergency medical services providers” in the definitions of “public safety sector employees”

Respectfully

Dave Johnston, KEMSA President