



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

HOUSE BILL 2371
Children and Seniors Committee
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY
PROPONENT

February 19, 2021

Chairman Concannon and Members of Children and Seniors Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on this important bill.

My name is Julie Donelon, and I am the President & CEO of MOCSA, the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault. I have worked in the field of sexual abuse and assault for over 25 years. On behalf of MOCSA, I am submitting written testimony in support of House Bill 2371.

MOCSA is the only rape crisis center serving Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Our mission is to improve the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and to prevent sexual violence in our community – the bi-state Kansas City metropolitan area. MOCSA provides advocacy and counseling services to individuals and families who have been impacted by sexual violence and we work to prevent violence through our education, prevention, and outreach programs. We see firsthand the impact that public policy has on our community, in survivors' experiences as victims of crime, as well as in the societal norms that guide how we respond to sexual violence. It is with both these things in mind that I express my gratitude for the committee's consideration of this bill.

MOCSA supports the passage of HB2371. The most important components of this bill to domestic and sexual violence victims in Kansas are:

- Removing the requirement to comply with child support enforcement in order to apply for SNAP and childcare assistance;
- Removing the minimum work requirement for adults attending private or public K-12 education or postsecondary institutions; and,
- Removing the lifetime limit for childcare assistance for adults attending postsecondary institutions (currently at 24 months).

When victims leave abusive relationships and seek independence, they often find the abuse escalates, creating substantial fear on the part of the victim, requiring intensive safety planning with a trained advocate. At the same time as the safety planning, the victim is most often facing a harsh reality put in place by the rules and regulations of the systems that purport to function as “assistance” or “help” for those facing the most difficult times of their lives.

Many times, instead of help and assistance, victims are faced with compliance requirements that could jeopardize their safety (e.g., child support enforcement mechanisms) along with limitations on improving one’s education and training in hopes of obtaining a living wage and meaningful employment.

The cooperation requirement for SNAP and Child Care has caused some moms to avoid applying for benefits out of fear of being put in touch with a former partner that was abusive. This chilling effect means that survivors and families are missing out on funds that help them meet their basic needs and move towards a self-sufficient future.

Domestic violence and sexual assault victims often rely on these safety net services during the time after leaving abusive partners and obtaining an employment opportunity that will allow for victims to properly, effectively, and sustainably care for themselves and/or their children.

Because these resources can be life-changing for so many victims of domestic and sexual violence, MOCSA **strongly supports the passage of HB2371.**

Sincerely submitted,



Julie Donelon, MSW
President & CEO