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STATE OF KANSAS

Testimony: HB2079 (Proponent)
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Chairman Billinger and members of the Committee:

HB2079, if enacted, would move the Safe at Home Program and the Charitable Organizations & Solicitation Act duties from the Secretary of State to the Attorney General. Our office worked with the Attorney General to introduce this legislation in 2020 through SB293 and in 2021 through HB2079 and HB2080.

The Safe at Home program, also known as the Address Confidentiality Program, provides a substitute address and free first-class mail forwarding to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking. Qualified participants may use the substitute address on all public records in lieu of their residential address. Safe at Home allows victims to register to vote, obtain a driver's license and receive other essential information without fear of being located by their abuser.

Victims who fear for their safety may complete an application with an enrolling assistant. Enrolling assistants typically work for non-profits or other organizations to support those in need. Enrolling agents are specifically trained to assist victims, explain Safe at Home, review participant responsibilities and determine if the victim would benefit from the Safe at Home program. Once certified, participants can use the substitute address on all state and local government documents. First-class and certified mail sent to the substitute address will be forwarded by Safe at Home to the participant's actual location at no cost.

Under current practice, our office works with victim's services organizations throughout Kansas to administer the Safe at Home Program. We are not the enrolling agent and only serve as the program administrator with no oversight or enforcement capabilities. Given the small size of our staff and the lack of expertise and training for working with abuse victims, we believe this program and, more importantly, its participants will be better served by the Office of Attorney General.

Additionally, the bill would reassign duties related to the Charitable Organizations & Solicitation Act to the Kansas Attorney General. Under current law, the Secretary of State is responsible for administering the registration of certain charitable organizations, solicitors and fundraisers, that are not otherwise exempted from registration by state statute (K.S.A. 17-1762), while the Attorney General's Office investigates and prosecutes violations of the charities statutes. For years, the Secretary of State has coordinated the regulation of charities with the Attorney General's office. HB2079 would allow for improved customer service and more efficient administration to have one agency perform these tasks.

HB2079 will allow victims of domestic abuse, stalking and other heinous acts of violence to be better served by trained staff in the Attorney General's Office. The bill would also effectively combine regulatory and enforcement responsibilities into a single agency. We appreciate your consideration and ask for your support of the bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katie Koupal
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Communications & Policy