

**House Committee on Judiciary
In Support of HB 2147**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

February 19, 2015

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

The Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center (WASAC) is a non-profit program in Sedgwick County designed to provide advocacy and support for survivors of sexual assault. Additionally, WASAC provides outreach and education to our community on issues of sexual assault and prevention.

Fortunately, WASAC has the ability to provide an advocate to work with people who are seeking a protection order as a result of sexual or domestic violence or stalking. This advocate assists approximately ten individuals **each** week who are seeking some type of protection order. Currently, many victims of sexual violence do not qualify for a Protection from Abuse or Protection from Stalking Order. This leaves the victim at risk of subsequent violent incidents and in fear for her or his safety. When a victim of sexual violence is “turned away” from obtaining a protection order, they feel let down by the ‘system’ to the point that survivors say, “So something else has to happen to me first before I can get an order?” This sends a horrible message to survivors. While we want people to report rape and other crimes, we are not taking the steps to support them in seeking safety.

Describing the scope of this issue is problematic without the permission of victims who are reluctant to come forward because of fear for their safety. Survivors have described situations in which they live in fear of the abuser coming back and they have no way to protect themselves and/or their children. It is unthinkable that survivors must endure a second attack and victimization before qualifying for something as basic as a protection order.

In addition, revision of this statute will benefit the parent trying to protect their child from further abuse by a neighbor, coach, family friend or other unrelated person in the child’s life. Again, we want children to feel safe after disclosing abuse. Parents who may obtain a protection order can have a concrete and legal way to ensure their child’s safety. This can be especially helpful during the process of an investigation and before any criminal action takes place.

I strongly recommend your support of this revision to the Protection from Abuse Act and the Protection from Stalking Act to support survivors of sexual violence who currently have little or no protection and peace of mind following this traumatic crime.

Kathy Williams
Executive Director
Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center (WASAC)