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Brigadier General Michael T. Venerdi
The Adjutant General and Director of
Emergency Management & Homeland Security

Laura Kelly, Governor

March 5, 2024

Committee on Veterans and Military
Kansas House of Representatives
Attn: Representative Ronald Ellis, Chair
Cc: Betty Boaz, Committee Assistant
State Capitol, Room 281-N
300 SW 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **neutral** testimony on Senate Bill No. 431. Master Sergeant Eugene Bradley, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of Legislative Affairs, will testify on my behalf. The agency is providing neutral testimony because the topic of this bill is not a legislative priority for The Adjutant General's Department. However, any effort to honor and remember Chaplain Emil Kapaun and his heroism and dedication to his fellow servicemembers is a good thing for Kansas.

You will undoubtedly hear from many people today on why Chaplain Kapaun is worthy of honoring, but one needs to look no further than the words of President Barak Obama in awarding the Medal of Honor in 2013: "(When he was a prisoner) they came for him. And over the protests and tears of the men who loved him, the guards sent him to a death house -- a hellhole with no food or water -- to be left to die. And yet, even then, his faith held firm. 'I'm going to where I've always wanted to go,' he told his brothers. 'And when I get up there, I'll say a prayer for all of you.' And then, as was taken away, he did something remarkable -- he blessed the guards. 'Forgive them,' he said, 'for they know not what they do.' Two days later, in that house of death, Father Kapaun breathed his last breath. His body was taken away, his grave unmarked, his remains unrecovered to this day."

Following the Medal of Honor Ceremony, Chaplain Kapaun was inducted into the Pentagon Hall of Heroes. General Ray Odierno memorialized him, saying "His fellow soldiers, for whom he gave his last dying breath, meant more to him than life." We are committed to doing what we can to keep his memory alive, and to see his legacy inspire future generations of Kansans to serve something greater than themselves.

You are welcome to reach out to me if you need anything. You may also contact my legislative liaison, Lt. Col. Keith Marshall, at 785-646-0011 or keith.marshall.1@us.af.mil.

MICHAEL T. VENERDI
Brigadier General, Kansas National Guard
The Adjutant General