

HB 2576
House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Submitted by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
February 15, 2012

OPPONENT

Chairman Brunk and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a statewide non-profit organization whose membership is the 29 sexual and domestic violence programs serving victims across Kansas. KCSDV has had an immigration project for several years because we know this is a population that is at great risk for sexual assault and domestic violence. It is a vulnerable population.

At the outset, KCSDV believes that criminalizing the harboring of undocumented immigrants is dangerous for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our services have always been for every victim, every time. We do not ask about immigration status, marital status, race, religion or any other characteristic of a victim when they come to programs seeking safety and support.

Research shows that immigrants have an increased risk of being victimized. We know of situations where immigration status is used to manipulate, control and further abuse. We know that abusers provide false and misleading information to immigrants in order to keep them from seeking help from law enforcement and from victims' services, even when they are here legally.

Any statutes that directly or indirectly discourage contact with victim services must seriously consider the potential increased risk to victims. By creating the crime of harboring, KCSDV is gravely concerned that victims will not seek services when they need them.

Finally, while we see that HB2576 has an exception for emergency services, we do not think this is sufficient to reduce or minimize the risk to victims. We know from the experiences in other states that have passed similar laws that the numbers of immigrant victims seeking services drops off dramatically once this kind of law is passed. Not because fewer victims need services, but because they are now afraid to access services.

With domestic violence and sexual assault homicide numbers running high in Kansas, this is not the time to frighten victims, any victims, who need services.

We cannot and do not support HB2576 for these reasons.

Submitted by,

Joyce Grover
Executive Director

House Federal & State Affairs

Date: 2-16-12

Attachment # 25