

**Testimony in support of SB 184:
Authorizing the Kansas Intelligence Fusion Center**

Senate Judiciary Committee

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of Health and Environment**

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Chairman Wilborn and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 184, which officially establishes the Kansas Intelligence Fusion Center, or “KIFC”. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is a proponent of this bill, as experience has clearly demonstrated the benefits of the model the KIFC has developed to protect Kansans from a wide range of threats.

In my role as State Epidemiologist, I serve on the KIFC Biothreat Team. This team epitomizes the model that the KIFC has developed and implemented. We are a diverse group of subject matter experts in the fields of medicine, interdisciplinary health and science research, veterinary medicine, plant pathology, law enforcement, intelligence analysis, and epidemiology. Our approach is to collect, evaluate, and analyze data and information from a wide range of sources to assess the potential impacts on public safety and health in the state, and act on that knowledge to mitigate the risks. Appropriate security clearances for team members allows us to access information that is not publicly available, and provides us unique perspectives on potential risks.

Over the past several years, there have been several notable public health threats to the nation and to Kansas. For example, in 2014, the largest outbreak of Ebola virus in history emerged in West Africa. Although the public’s attention did not pick up until early in the fall of that year, the Biothreat Team had been gathering detailed information about the events unfolding in the affected countries. The availability of this specialized information was instrumental in my work with colleagues to develop the Kansas preparedness and response plan for Ebola virus by the first week of August, 2014 – nearly two months before the first case diagnosed in the U.S. occurred in Texas, and six months before funding specifically to fight Ebola virus was provided to the states by the federal government. When the first suspected case appeared in the state in October, 2014, Kansas was ready.

With the emergence of Zika virus in Brazil in 2015, we found ourselves once again responding to a global public health crisis. And once again, the Biothreat Team had been thoroughly engaged in assessing information and reporting from various sources and the potential risks to Kansas. The expertise among members of the Biothreat Team and the collaborative nature of our work helped to ensure that Kansas has had a timely, effective, and robust response to this continuing crisis.

While I have focused my testimony on the work of the Biothreat Team, other domains and teams within the KIFC approach their work in a similar manner. While other Intelligence Fusion Centers throughout the country have more of a law enforcement focus, The Kansas approach is to focus on prevention. The unique structure and collaboration has resulted not only in more effective analysis and consumption of information, but also to the production of information products by the KIFC and pushed out to the intelligence community.

Official designation of the Kansas Intelligence Fusion Center through the passage of SB 184 will help to ensure this important work to protect Kansans can continue. Thank you again for your time.