

HB 2524
Committee on Utilities
WRITTEN TESTIMONY
March 16, 2018
SUPPORT

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a statewide non-profit organization whose membership is the 27 sexual and domestic violence programs serving victims across Kansas. KCSDV provides information; training; and, analysis and policy work on issues impacting victims of domestic and sexual violence, their families, and their communities.

KCSDV is supportive of HB2524 and believes it will increase safety for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and their families.

For many of us, our mobile phone functions not just as our telephone but as our appointments calendar, our wrist watch, our word processor, our access to email/texting, our photo album, our telephone book, our map, our yellow pages, our weather station, our entertainment center, our information storage center, our wallet, and so much more.

For victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence, mobile phones are also their lifeline to safety. They use them to reach out for help, access services, call law enforcement, find safety information on-line, and keep in touch with an advocate while making critical safety decisions.

Unfortunately, if an abuser continues to have access to the victim's phone (or the account on which the phone resides), not only does the victim potentially lose all of the information that might be contained in the phone but the phone can be used by the abuser to subject the victim to further abuse and isolation. When the abuser has continued access to the wireless account of the victim, the phones can be used to track the location of the victim, check who the victim may be reaching out to for help, delete helpful information that the victim is using, and much more. Think about the "Find My Phone" feature as an example and how that may be use when an abuser is stalking or tracking the victim with the intention to harm or terrify.

If the victim is not the primary account holder, she may lose her telephone number and all of her contact information when the abuser cuts her off from the account. Without this ability to separate accounts immediately and without delay, a victim and sometimes the children as well, become more vulnerable and further exposed to abuse and violence. Others won't be able to

reach out to help because the phone may be disconnected. The victim is at risk of being completely cut off from support and assistance.

Wireless carriers have sometimes been able to assist victims who have come to them seeking immediate separation from their abusers' accounts. Victims may have relied upon the kindness of the store associate at ATT or Verizon or Sprint or T-Mobile. However, these companies have little authority to separate these accounts and many do not believe they can act on these requests.

KCSDV believes HB 2524 provides a way for this separation of wireless services accounts to happen quickly and through a process that is already available (protection orders).

KCSDV has worked with the sponsors of HB2524 in an effort to streamline this separation of accounts process and has worked with them on the amendments to HB2524. KCSDV supports the amendments to the Bill.

KCSDV is still concerned with how a pro se litigant is going to find information about how to serve the resident agent of the wireless services provider. Recent research through the business entity database at the Kansas Secretary of State website showed no fewer than 65 active and in good standing entities with similar names to those major wireless service providers operating in Kansas. Unrepresented victims will have a difficult time deciding who to serve. KCSDV remains in dialog about how to rectify this problem and simplify the way victims will get this information.

Phones are so much more important than they used to be; they are carried with us everywhere and we can hardly function without them. However, they are also potential tracking tools and critical lifelines, making this a critical addition to Kansas law. HB2524 will allow quick and immediate separation of these wireless services accounts, thereby increasing safety for survivors and their families.

Respectfully submitted,



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