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Testimony in Support of House Bill 2290
Creating a Crime Victims Compensation Division within the Attorney General's Office

Presented to the House Committee on the Judiciary
By Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt

February 19, 2019

Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 2290. This bill was introduced at my request.

The Crime Victims Compensation Board has, since its establishment in 1978, done a great service to the State of Kansas and those citizens of our state who have, through no fault of their own, become victims of violent crime. Each year, the Board awards compensation to hundreds of our fellow Kansans who find themselves in that circumstance. In its 40 years of existence, the Board has granted nearly \$90 million in payments to crime victims.

The three members of the Crime Victims Compensation Board are appointed by the attorney general, subject to confirmation by the Senate. Since 1989, the program has been managed as part of the attorney general's office. The structure of how the Board, its staff and the attorney general's office interact has, however, at times been murky. In seeking to clarify the responsibilities, in 2012, I entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Board. Under the terms of that MOU, I established within the office a Division of Crime Victims Compensation to administer the crime victims compensation program. The staff of that Division are employees of the attorney general's office, and the Division is led by the Executive Director, who under current law is appointed by the Board but also remains an employee of the attorney general's office.

The bill before you today seeks to codify in law some of the provisions of the 2012 MOU, as well as some other provisions we think make sense now, having operated under that MOU for more than six years. This structure allows the attorney general's office to continue managing the day-to-day business of the crime victims compensation program, including receiving and processing applications and making payments for approved claims. It also allows the Board members, who are unpaid volunteers, to focus on the important and fundamental task of reviewing and approving applications.

The Board has voted unanimously to support this legislation as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

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