



**Proponent Testimony on HB2228
House Judiciary Committee
Testimony of Juliane Walker, Executive Director
Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas, Inc.
February 15, 2021**

Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee:

My name is Juliane Walker and I am the Executive Director of Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas (CACKS) is the state Chapter association that represents sixteen nationally accredited Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) in our state and one newly developed CAC. Our Child Advocacy Centers are neutral, child-friendly facilities that work with the Department for Children and Families and law enforcement agencies in more than 60 counties through a formal memorandum of understanding. Child Advocacy Centers coordinate joint investigations, conduct forensic interviews of child victims, provide child and family advocacy services, and create access to medical and mental health treatment immediately following a report of child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse and neglect, human trafficking, and children who are a witness to violence. **We appear before the committee today as a proponent of House Bill 2228.**

It is imperative that every child victim of abuse be given the opportunity to receive a medical examination by a specially trained medical provider, and forensic evidence collection in acute cases, following a report of abuse. In cases where a sexual assault evidence collection kit is collected in a case of child abuse, there needs to be assurance that the kit be submitted in a timely manner to the appropriate forensic laboratory for evaluation.

A referral for a medical examination is paramount to the child's overall well-being. It is not only necessary in cases involving severe abuse where medical treatment is obvious, it also helps children in other cases feel assured that, despite the abuse they endured, they are growing and healthy, they can still have babies when they grow up, they are not "damaged", and that they are cared for and their health is important. By adding Child Advocacy Centers into this bill as an intentional location for medical services to occur, this increases options where medical examinations can take place and will help families access these services. Families and non-offending caregivers need options that meet their many needs, including how and when to take their child for a medical examination, do they have transportation, would it be a better option to have the examination conducted on-site at the CAC at the time of the forensic interview, etc. In Kansas, our Child Advocacy Centers are a critical component of the front-line response to abuse reports and care for children and we thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this Bill.

Respectfully submitted by,

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