



Proponent Testimony on SB204—Written Only
House Judiciary Committee
Testimony of Juliane Walker, Executive Director
Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas, Inc.
March 11, 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 (CAKKS) 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.

The Children's Advocacy Center of Kansas supports the passage of Senate Bill 204. This bill addresses an archaic practice that still exists in law today. Requiring a victim of crime to undergo a psychological evaluation is unjust and intrusive and often perpetuates the myth that victims of crime are lying about their encounter with the perpetrator. Many of the victims being required to have an evaluation are children who have been sexually abused, most often being abused by someone they know and trust. This practice is counterintuitive to providing victims with fairness and justice within the legal system that is there to protect them from further harm. In cases of child sexual abuse, children are often put in a position to "prove" that they have been abused, due to lingering and antiquated views that children routinely make up or lie about abuse. Requiring them to submit to a psychological examination only reinforces this myth and causes additional trauma to the child. During a psychological evaluation, questions tend to be repetitive in nature and this often causes confusion for the child, can cause the child to inadvertently change details of the abuse and even cause them to recant the abuse all together. In addition, if the provider performing the psychological evaluation is not properly trained in child trauma, the evaluation could potentially cause more harm to the child and lead to a misdiagnosis. Children are not responsible for the crimes that have been committed against them, nor are they responsible for the overall behavior of an offender. Offenders should not be allowed to exploit a child victim in hopes of creating doubt due to their own criminal behavior.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for SB204.

Respectfully submitted by,

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