

HB2122
House Judiciary Committee
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY
March 11, 2021
PROPONENT

Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a statewide non-profit organization whose members are the 25 sexual and domestic violence programs serving victims across Kansas. KCSDV provides information; training; and analysis and policy work on issues impacting victims of sexual and domestic violence, their families, and their communities.

KCSDV strongly supports HB2122. This legislation will empower individuals with disabilities and the elderly to make decisions for themselves, protecting their sense of autonomy and self-worth.

Supported decision-making is a process that people from all walks of life and backgrounds engage in. Every time a medical doctor explains an illness and possible treatment to a patient, the parties are engaging in supported decision-making. Supported decision making is used any time someone seeks advice from the people in their lives they trust. This advice and support helps them make informed decisions. This bill creates a formal structure for a normal part of life that can be used as a tool for those who need assistance without hindering any of their freedoms and their ability to live a self-directed life. This tool would not serve as a replacement for the formal structures now in place but instead, serve to offer a less-restrictive alternative.

The passage of this bill would serve to encourage the use of an additional resource for one of the most vulnerable populations in our state. Individuals with disabilities are two and a half times more likely to be the victims of a violent crime than those without disabilities. This abuse can occur at the hands of their caretakers or guardians, making it difficult for the survivor to report the abuse and seek services. Even if the guardian is not the one perpetrating the abuse, having a guardian can create burdens to accessing services, especially if the guardian does not believe the abuse occurred. Individuals with disabilities who take part in supported decision-making agreements are more likely to have an established support system and closer personal relationships with the people in their lives. This support system will make it easier for them to report abuse and seek services. Having this option available and recognized by the state of Kansas could serve to help survivors of violent crime successfully seek safety.

Sincerely submitted on behalf of KCSDV,

Lindsie Ford
KCSDV Staff Attorney