

**SB 501**  
**Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**March 10, 2022**

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a statewide non-profit organization whose membership is the 25 sexual and domestic violence programs serving victims across Kansas. KCSDV provides information, training, and analysis on issues impacting victims of domestic and sexual violence, their families, and their communities. Our members, the local advocacy programs, are committed to providing quality services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, empowering victims to live independently without the ongoing fear of violence, and helping victims secure the resources necessary for a safe and healthy future.

SB 501 would be overly burdensome to survivors of domestic and sexual violence who rely on public benefits as a tool to establish a safe and healthy future. Increasing the reporting requirements for families that receive benefits creates an almost untenably high barrier for those who rely on a public safety net to help them stay afloat while they try to create a safe life for themselves and their children.

The most dangerous time for a victim and their children is when they choose to leave an abusive relationship. Violence and abuse often escalate significantly during this time. This time is also the most fraught financially for victims. Financial abuse is one of the most insidious types of abuse for victims and creates one of the biggest obstacles for victims attempting to leave their abuser. Years of isolation and minimal access to shared financial resources often put victims in the position of having to choose between impoverished safety or financial security that comes attached to an abusive partner.

When victims leave abusive relationships and seek independence, they are often faced with the harsh reality put in place by the rules and regulations of a system that purports to function as “assistance” or “help” for those facing the most difficult times of their lives. Increasing these regulations does not serve any purpose other than to make it even more difficult for families to continue to qualify for aid they so desperately need. Under the current system, victims are still required to report changes in circumstances and income that might affect their eligibility to receive benefits. They are required to do so in what this legislature has previously determined to be a reasonable amount of time. Decreasing the reporting time and increasing the basis for making such a report must be made may sound like a good idea but fundamentally fails to

consider the realities of daily life for most Kansas. Our impoverished neighbors who are forced to rely on these systems often struggle to balance the rigors of daily life and efforts to improve their circumstances, whether it be through education, training, or finding healthy ways to address their trauma and move forward.

Domestic violence and sexual assault victims often need to rely on these safety net services during the time after leaving abusive partners along with securing an employment opportunity that will allow for victims to properly, effectively, and sustainably care for themselves and/or their children. Enacting measures that will make it even more difficult to leave their abusive partners does not benefit survivors or Kansans in any way.

It is for these reasons that we strongly oppose SB 501.

Sincerely submitted on behalf of KCSDV,

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