



**Kansas Association of
Chiefs of Police**

PO Box 2163
Hutchinson, KS 67504
(620) 242-6565



**Kansas Sheriffs
Association**

PO Box 1122
Pittsburg, KS 66762
(620) 687-1206



**Kansas Peace Officers
Association**

PO Box 2592
Wichita, KS 67201
(316) 722-8433

**Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee
In Support of HB2676
February 8, 2024**

Chairperson Humphries and Committee Members:

Our associations support HB2676, which will fill some gaps in our assisting suicide statute, K.S.A. 21-5407. This bill is a different approach compared to HB2488 which dealt with the same problem. We also provided supporting testimony for HB2488 on January 31.

In HB2676, the solution is proposed to be three new forms of assisted suicide found on page 1 lines 17-24. We believe the proposed severity levels are appropriate for the conduct.

Reducing instances of people engaging in the proscribed conduct is an important part of the puzzle of reducing suicides. Suicidal persons are on the edge of carrying out their suicide, acting toward carrying out their suicide, or calling out for help they can't obtain on their own. They need support and encouragement to not carry out the suicide. Encouraging them to carry out the act is extremely irresponsible and reckless, carrying a high risk to the person contemplating suicide.

Improving this statute is an especially important step for Kansas. A 2023 report by Mental Health America¹ ranked Kansas as having the highest prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to mental health care of all US states. The suicide of Max Coleman exemplifies this horrible rating. He had been trying to get help for weeks, and his suicide reportedly came between the day he finally was able to get an appointment date set and the day of that appointment. The Mental Health America Report also shows that Kansas had the 4th highest rate of Adults with Serious Thoughts of Suicide at 6.44%.

The challenge for the committee is finding adequate culpability terms and descriptions of the criminal conduct in a way that limits the new unlawful acts to egregious conduct without infringing on First Amendment rights. One of the things that stood out to me in the testimony on HB2488, was that the egregious conduct leading to the suicide of Max Coleman was conducted by individuals who had knowledge that Mr. Coleman was struggling with suicidal thoughts, a heightened level of conduct neither bill addresses.

Ed Klumpp
Legislative Liaison
eklumpp@cox.net

¹ Reinert, M, Fritze, D. & Nguyen, T. (October 2022). "The State of Mental Health in America 2023"
Mental Health America, Alexandria VA. <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2023-State-of-Mental-Health-in-America-Report.pdf>