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Secretary of State



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STATE OF KANSAS

Testimony: HB2079 (Proponent)

House Judiciary Committee
Monday, January 25, 2020

Chairman Patton and members of the Committee:

HB2079, if enacted, would move the Safe at Home Program into the Office of the Attorney General. Our office worked with the Attorney General to introduce this legislation in 2020 through SB293, and in 2021 through HB2079.

The Safe at Home program, also known as the Address Confidentiality Program, provides a substitute address and free first-class mail forwarding to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking. Qualified participants may use the substitute address on all public records in lieu of their residential address. Safe at Home allows victims to register to vote, obtain a driver's license and receive other essential information without fear of being located by their abuser.

Victims who fear for their safety may complete an application with an enrolling assistant. Enrolling assistants have been trained to assist victims, explain Safe at Home, review participant responsibilities and determine if the victim would benefit from the Safe at Home program. Once certified, participants can use the substitute address on all state and local government documents. Private businesses are encouraged, but not required, to accept the substitute address. First-class and certified mail sent to the substitute address will be forwarded by Safe at Home to the participant's actual location at no cost. Packages may only be forwarded if prior approval has been given by the Safe at Home program coordinator.

Under current practice, our office works with victim's services organizations to administer the Safe at Home Program. However, we are not the enrolling agent and only serve as the program administrator with no oversight or enforcement capabilities. Given the small size of our staff and the lack of expertise and training for working with abuse victims, we believe this program and, more importantly, its participants will be better served by the Office of Attorney General.

On behalf of the Office of Secretary of State, we believe HB2079 will allow victims of domestic abuse, stalking and other heinous acts of violence to be better served by trained staff in the Attorney General's Office. We appreciate your consideration and ask for your support of the bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Clay Barker
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Assistant General Counsel