



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

Testimony from MOCSA's President & CEO Julie Donelon, MSW

IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2120: Removing the spousal exception from the crime of sexual battery.

House Committee on Judiciary
February 2, 2021

Chairman Patton and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on this important bill.

My name is Julie Donelon and I am the President & CEO of MOCSA, the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault. I have worked in the field of sexual abuse and assault for over 25 years. On behalf of MOCSA, I am testifying today in support of House Bill 2120.

MOCSA is the only rape crisis center serving Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Our mission is to improve the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and to prevent sexual violence in our community – the bi-state Kansas City metropolitan area. MOCSA provides advocacy and counseling services to individuals and families who have been impacted by sexual violence and we work to prevent violence through our education, prevention, and outreach programs. We see firsthand the impact that public policy has on our community, in survivors' experiences as victims of crime, as well as in the societal norms that guide how we respond to sexual violence. It is with both these things in mind that I express my gratitude for the committee's consideration of this bill.

The policies and statutes that govern the criminal justice system in Kansas reflect our priorities and our values. This proposed change to statute is simple and it is long overdue. HB 2120 will remove what is known as a "spousal exemption" from the elements of the crime of sexual battery. The importance of removing this language is both practical and symbolic. Passing HB 2120 sends a clear message to Kansans – that violence is no less harmful when it happens at the hands of someone a victim loves and trusts. It sends the message that the state of Kansas has a vested interest in ensuring that our citizens are safe in their own homes. I believe this is a message that truly represents our values and our priorities.

mocsa.org

MOCSA is a United Way partner agency.

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As a society, we have made so much progress over the last fifty years in our understanding of sexual violence and our work to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Part of this work has been to break through the myths and misconceptions about sexual violence and shed light on the reality of the problem. We know that sexual assault is more likely be committed by someone a victim knows, and according to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), about 33% of assaults are committed by an intimate partner. We have removed spousal exemptions from almost all sexual offenses in our State, and we are proud to support this legislation to remove this remaining vestige of the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julie Donelon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Julie Donelon, MSW
President & CEO