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Sponsor Testimony- SB 225
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
January 21, 2020

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for hearing Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 225, which would require public schools to post a sign that contains a child abuse or neglect hotline phone number.

Currently, 41 other states have laws or rules regarding signs with a child abuse hotline number in schools. This is a low cost way of empowering children who have been abused and giving them somewhere to go for help. Many times, children who are abused know their abuser, and are afraid that if they report the abuse, they will not be believed. It is a scary thing to report abuse, especially for a child. By having an anonymous hotline, students know they will be listened to and believed.

Researchers estimate that only 38% of child victims disclose the fact that they have been sexually abused^{1,2} and of Of those children who are sexually abused, 20% are abused before the age of 8. Adult survivors of child abuse frequently report that they did not tell anyone of the

¹ London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S., & Shuman, D. (2003) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11(1), 194-226.

² Ullman, S. E. (2007). Relationship to perpetrator, disclosure, social reactions, and PTSD symptoms in child sexual abuse survivors. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 16(1), 19-36.

abuse they endured. Abuse has many harmful effects into adulthood, and the earlier it is detected, the better.

This bill only requires one sign in each building, and the cost to schools is literally the cost of printing the poster. This legislation will not create an undue burden on schools, but rather will help children recognize the signs of abuse, and that it is okay to tell someone when they are being abused or neglected. Rather, it has the potential to help children who are suffering from abuse. When we see cases like Takoda Collins in Dayton, it makes everyone wonder what could have been done to prevent such a tragedy. This legislation is one simple change that can help combat child abuse and has the potential to save lives.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to take any questions at this time.