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Legislators take first step toward reducing preventable child deaths in Kansas

TOPEKA—The Senate Judiciary Committee today unanimously voted in support of Senate Bill 259 and recommended its passage to the full Senate. The bill will help to significantly reduce preventable child deaths in Kansas.

The State Child Death Review Board reviews the death of every child through age 17 who is a Kansas resident or dies in Kansas. The board has reviewed about 8,700 child deaths since its inception. Currently, Kansas statute prevents data collected by the State Child Death Review Board from being used for research purposes. Senate Bill 259 amends that statute so that researchers and public health officials can examine de-identified data to develop prevention strategies that save Kansas children's lives.

The bill has wide support among children's health professionals, law enforcement and child safety experts. At a recent hearing, no opponents testified against the bill, which costs the state nothing.

"I am in full support of Senate Bill 259. If I can help save one parent from walking the path I had to walk it will be worth it," said Tracey McNeely, a Wichita parent who lost an infant son to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and now sits on the Kansas Infant Death and SIDS Network Inc. board. "Since my son's death many things have been discovered about safe sleep and the occurrence of SIDS has declined by 50 percent. I know that much more needs to be done, and I see this as another way to gain ground into the reasons Kansas has a higher rate of infant mortality than the national average."

A similar version of the bill has been introduced in the Kansas House of Representatives. House Bill 2767 is awaiting a hearing in the Committee on Judiciary.

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