

# Kentucky's domestic violence, sexual assault, and child advocacy groups rally support for long-term "pension fix" in HB8

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*Life-saving services in jeopardy unless lawmakers can agree on permanent solution for the state's beleaguered retirement system.*

FRANKFORT, KY, USA, February 19, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Feb. 10, Kentucky's House of Representatives voted unanimously in favor of House Bill 8, which implements solutions that would provide long overdue relief for the state's quasi-government agencies, the majority of which provide essential social services such as emergency shelter for victims of violence, mental health services, and more.

For several years, these quasi-government agencies, like the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs, and the Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky, and many of their member programs have shouldered the burden of Frankfort's broken pension system by paying exorbitant rates on retirement expenses, some of which effectively double staffing costs.

These cumbersome expenses threaten the long term solvency of agencies that provide state-mandated, life-saving services to the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens.

House Bill 8 puts an end to the "kick the can" approach that quasi-agencies have had to accept for years and paves the way for a fair, equitable, and long-term solution that will prevent reduction or elimination of life-saving services and programs such as domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child advocacy centers.

The bill enjoyed wide-scale, bi-partisan support in the House of Representatives, and is now moving to the Senate, where its fate is less certain.

KCADV and allied groups KASAP and CAC Kentucky are among many statewide agencies rallying support for House Bill 8. A [Petition to Pass House Bill 8](#) is circulating on social media, with close to 1000 signatures as of Feb. 18.

Organization leaders say that critical services and programs are in jeopardy if House Bill 8 fails to pass. What's more, long term planning for financial stability and program services are nearly impossible without a permanent solution.

## Quotes from CAC Kentucky, KASAP, and KCADV Leadership

Quote from Caroline Ruschell, Executive Director, CAC Kentucky

"Every child victim of abuse in Kentucky deserves a trauma-informed comprehensive response that will bring them justice and healing. Kentucky's Children's Advocacy Centers ensure that our children receive critical specialized services, like medical exams, therapy, advocacy and forensic interviewing. These essential services are at risk. House Bill 8 will allow Children's Advocacy Centers to continue to provide direct services to victims and families. Now is not the time to reduce critical services for children and families enduring the impact of abuse. We urge the Kentucky General Assembly to pass House Bill 8 and support the work of Kentucky's Children's Advocacy Centers"

Quote from Eileen A. Recktenwald, Executive Director, KASAP

"For over 40 years, Kentucky has been a place that understands that any person who experiences sexual assault is in crisis and should have access to services whenever they need them. Yet now the regional rape crisis centers in Kentucky are in crisis themselves. They cannot afford to stay in the Kentucky Employers Retirements system, a benefit that has helped them maintain a strong and stable workforce, nor can they afford to get out. To tell the truth, they don't want to get out. HB8 would allow them to continue to provide benefits for their strong, experienced staff and pay the system what they owe."

Quote from Angela Yannelli, CEO, KCADV

"The system of domestic violence shelters across Kentucky is one of the most successful examples of how community-based programs work together to provide state mandated trauma-informed essential services to every Kentuckian. Without HB8, this system risks severe cuts in services that translates into increased threat of harm to vulnerable Kentuckians. Our programs participating in KERS operate under nominal budgets. Facing a rate increase of over 85% just to provide a decent benefit to advocates keeping shelters open 24/7 even during a pandemic is debilitating and not sustainable. We need to keep our system strong and whole. "

Candace Chaney

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