



Chair and members of the committee,

My name is David Karnes, and I am the Public Policy Specialist at Violence Free Colorado, the state's anti-domestic violence coalition. I am here today in support of HB26-1123.

While this bill is not specific to domestic violence, the issues it addresses are deeply connected to broader patterns of abuse and victimization. In our work, we often talk about how abuse is enabled by power imbalances, isolation, fear, and dependency. Those same dynamics can be especially acute in detention settings, where people have limited privacy, limited control, and very little ability to remove themselves from harm. If we want to create a Colorado, and systems within Colorado, that are safer for all, that has to include people in custody.

Sexual abuse in detention settings is about more than individual misconduct. It is about bodily autonomy, dignity, vulnerability, and the enormous barriers people face when the person harming them is also part of the system responsible for their custody and care.

I support this bill because it addresses that reality from several important angles.

First, it strengthens protections around strip searches by requiring reasonable belief, requiring two peace officers to make that determination, and requiring documentation of both the reason for the strip search and the results. It also limits the use of body-worn cameras during strip searches when other forms of recording or surveillance are available. Those changes matter because strip searches are among the most invasive actions the state can take, and when guardrails are weak, the risk of humiliation, misuse, and abuse grows.

Second, the bill takes important steps to protect people from further harm when recordings capture nudity or strip searches. It limits copying, redistribution, remote viewing, and cloud upload of those recordings, and it restricts reproduction of strip search recordings in criminal proceedings except in narrow circumstances. That is important because privacy violations can become their own form of harm, especially in a setting where a person already has very little power.

Third, the bill recognizes that policy on paper is not enough without a clear response structure. It requires local detention facilities to establish staff reporting and response protocols for suspected, alleged, or witnessed sexual abuse; inform prisoners of their

rights and available resources in writing and in an accessible language; allow timely access to confidential sexual assault advocates; and designate a PREA coordinator whose contact information is provided to both prisoners and the public. Those are meaningful steps because survivors need clear information, real access to support, and some avenue to reach help outside the institution itself.

I also want to highlight the whistleblower protections in this bill. In any closed system, retaliation can be one of the biggest barriers to accountability. Protecting staff who disclose suspected, alleged, or witnessed sexual abuse in good faith helps create a culture where abuse is harder to hide and harder to normalize. That matters for prisoner safety and for institutional integrity.

Finally, permanent revocation of P.O.S.T. certification for officers found to have sexually abused a prisoner is an important accountability measure. Sexual abuse by someone with custodial authority is an extreme abuse of power, and it should be treated that way.

From our perspective, this bill reflects a simple but important principle: no setting, including a jail, should operate as though people's safety, dignity, and bodily autonomy matter less once they are in custody.

Thank you for your consideration.

In Partnership,
David Karnes



March 2026

To: House Judiciary Committee

Re: AAUW SUPPORTS HB26-1123-Preventing Sexual Abuse in Jails

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members:

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are members of AAUW branches around Colorado.

AAUW has led the fight on women's health and safety issues, and we have made progress over the years. Yet there is still work to do. House Bill 1123 recognizes dangers faced by women defendants in local jails, and provides new protections against sexual abuse. Restrictions on strip searches, protocols for responding to and reporting suspected sexual abuse, protection for those who report abuse, compliance with federal standards, and loss of P.O.S.T. certification for offending peace officers are important and long-overdue measures.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado strongly supports House Bill 1123 and requests your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Hon. Su Ryden
AAUW Colorado Advocacy Director

16699 E. Kentucky Ave.
Aurora, CO 80017
303.898.5797
suryden25@gmail.com

American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



SHARA SMITH
Chief Executive Officer

**INTERFAITH
ALLIANCE**
OF COLORADO
ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY TOGETHER

March 11, 2026

RE: Support for HB26-1123 Preventing Sexual Abuse in Jails

Chairperson Mabrey and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our strong support for HB26-1123. The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado promotes justice, religious liberty, and interfaith understanding through building relationships in order to educate, advocate, and catalyze social change. We have over 400 congregations in our statewide network, representing over two-dozen faith traditions.

We have written often to this committee to offer support for policies that address needed reforms in our legal system. HB26-1123 serves our state by strengthening protections for the human dignity and constitutional rights of people confined in Colorado jails and fostering more trust in our legal system. This policy comes before you with a particular urgency, given the abuses within our system that have come to light. The deprivation of liberty is the gravest consequence within Colorado's legal system and we must respond with equal gravity to the needs and safety of those whose liberty we've constrained, regardless of why we have done so.

Correctional facilities have a duty under the law to prevent and address sexual assault and exploitation within their walls. This reflects the ethical and moral duty embedded within our constitution to provide safe and dignified conditions for incarcerated individuals. When a culture of abuse is allowed to flourish within those walls, we have failed in those duties. The changes in HB26-1123 address protections for incarcerated individuals, including making sure that individuals are aware of and can access necessary resources. Critically, the bill also includes whistleblower protections for staff who report sexual abuse. This is particularly important in combating a culture where abuse is excused and moral injury to correctional officers is minimized.

We respectfully ask that you support HB26-1123 and vote Yes to advance it from the committee with your favorable recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shara Smith, CEO
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

March 2, 2026

To Whomever this May Concern,

Our names are Kendall Taomoto and Olivia Sobieszczyk and we are Masters of Social Work Students at Colorado State University. We are writing to you to urge you to support HB26-1123, *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Jails*.

Sexual abuse in jails and prisons remains a deeply prevalent and often under-addressed issue. While incarceration removes an individual's liberty, it should never remove their fundamental right to safety and dignity. Protecting incarcerated individuals from sexual abuse is a basic responsibility of the legal system.

We both have experience working within the criminal legal system. Kendall is currently completing her internship with the Larimer County Probation Department as a Deputy Probation Officer. Through this work, she has developed a strong commitment to addressing systemic gaps that impact justice-involved individuals. During a tour of the Larimer County Jail, we were informed of measures in place to prevent sexual abuse and provide victim support, including protocols surrounding strip searches. While these policies are important, oversight and accountability are essential to ensure consistent and effective implementation across all facilities and situations.

HB26-1123 represents an important system towards strengthening protections and preventing sexual abuse within jail systems. The legislation would help safeguard the well-being and dignity of individuals in custody and reinforce standards of accountability.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your full support of HB26-1123. Thank you for your consideration of our perspective and for your service to our community. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and look forward to seeing continued efforts to ensure the safety and protection of all individuals in Colorado's jail systems.

Sincerely,

Kendall Taomoto
Olivia Sobieszczyk

School of Social Work
Colorado State University
1005 W. Lake Street
Fort Collins, CO 80523

House Judiciary

03/11/2026 01:30 PM

HB26-1123 Preventing Sexual Abuse in Jails

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Ashton Key For themselves	<p>Hello, my name is Ashton. I regret I cannot join you today, as this topic is something I am deeply passionate about. I am currently studying to earn my Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology at the University of Denver. As a requirement of my program, I am also completing my first year internship requirements. I happen to be an intern at an agency that provides offense-specific treatment for people who have committed sexual offenses. Throughout my time at this agency, the number of clients that have disclosed their own sexual abuse while servicing their time in prison is astonishing, and vile. This abuse comes at the hands of their fellow inmates, guards, and others in positions of power.</p> <p>As research shows us, such extreme trauma changes the way the survivor's brain works. We ask these people to undergo intense treatment, that is designed to disrupt their very core beliefs surrounding sex, themselves, and the world at large. Treatment cannot be as effective if the person is presenting with severe mental health concerns as a result of the assault. They will no longer trust helping professionals, such as their supervising officer or therapist, because we are now lumped in with the people who hurt them.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to defend the citizens of this great state against injustices, no matter if they are behind bars or walking free. They are paying their dues, do not make it more difficult on them, us (the helping professionals), and the innocent citizens by continuing to allow this abuse to occur freely and without consequence. I urge you to protect your people, no matter who they are.</p>