

House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
House Bill 2698
Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC)
February 13, 2024

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. I am Megan Milner, Deputy Secretary of Juvenile and Adult Community Based Services with the Kansas Department of Corrections. I am pleased to present testimony today in support of House Bill 2698, which would allow juvenile residents at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex to leave the facility for certain activities related to rehabilitation efforts.

The Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) is the state's only juvenile correctional facility, serving male and female youth adjudicated by the court as juvenile offenders and sentenced to a determined period of time at the facility.

Over the years, KJCC has implemented multiple changes in response to research regarding justice-involved youth and best practices in our field. We have adjusted programming and education to reflect the needs of the population. This has resulted in improvements such as:

- Implementing evidence-based groups and programming that are specific to the juvenile population.
- Training staff on gender-responsive principles.
- Reducing the use of isolation.
- Partnerships with Washburn Institute of Technology to provide on-site certification programs in high-need industries.

As of January 31, 2024, there were 141 youth at KJCC: 12 females and 129 males. Of these 141 youth:

- 100% are 15 years of age and older
- 96% are 16 and over
- 77% are 18 and over

This means that at least 96% of the youth at KJCC will be leaving the facility eligible for entry into the workforce.

The Washburn Institute of Technology provides multiple certification programs at KJCC and, in 2021, KJCC entered into an agreement with Jobs for America's Graduates – Kansas (JAG-K) to provide supports to students as they earn their diploma and explore career opportunities. Additionally, in 2022, KJCC partnered with the Department of Commerce to fund a workforce development specialist position, to be housed on the campus of KJCC. This specialist provides connection between residents and employers or workforce centers across the state.

House Bill 2698 would allow us to take one more step in providing employment skills and experience to residents at KJCC. With the passage of this bill, a young man could have his first experience in an employment setting, learning important skills with the guidance provided to them by an employer and KJCC staff. Or a young woman could pursue an additional vocational program on the campus of a technical college. Education and employment are risk factors, meaning they impact the likelihood that a youth could commit another crime once released. By providing not only education and certification, but also the real-world experience for these youth, we can help give them the opportunities necessary to make meaningful changes when they return to their communities.

Thank you for allowing me to be here today. I am happy to stand for questions.