House Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 244
Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs

Monday, March 20, 2023

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We also serve as the state's affiliate for the National Retail Federation through the Kansas Retail Council. The Kansas Retail Council (KRC) focuses on retail business issues and gives Kansas retailers a unified voice on legislative and public policy matters.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 244, a bill introduced by the Attorney General to combat a growing threat of organized retail theft. Organized retail theft has become one of the biggest issues to retailers across the country. Up until recently, prosecutors and retailers have been limited in what could be done to address organized theft. Target's CEO stated in November that retail theft cost their company more than $400 million in 2022 alone. Congress finally has passed the INFORM Act, a priority of retailers across the country to help track sales of merchandise on third-party seller websites as products were stolen from stores only to be resold on another website under a third party seller.

Often times, organized retail theft is a coordinated effort across multiple jurisdictions, as thieves travel county to county to steal merchandise. SB 244 attempts to provide stronger enforcement capabilities by the Attorney General to allow prosecution authority when multiple counties are involved. We applaud Attorney General Kobach for making retail theft a priority in his first term in office and on behalf of the Kansas Retail Council are happy to be supporters of this legislation and other efforts to deter these criminal acts against retailers.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 244 and I'm happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.