

SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



RYAN BATY
CHAIRMAN
FOURTH DISTRICT

SARAH LOPEZ
CHAIR PRO TEM
SECOND DISTRICT

PETE MEITZNER
COMMISSIONER
FIRST DISTRICT

DAVID T. DENNIS
COMMISSIONER
THIRD DISTRICT

JIM HOWELL
COMMISSIONER
FIFTH DISTRICT

100 NORTH BROADWAY • SUITE 660 • WICHITA, KANSAS 67202-2212 • TELEPHONE (316) 660-9300 • FAX (316) 660-9330

March 18, 2024

KDADS Budget Testimony

Dear Chairman Billinger and Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

I am writing on behalf of the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners in support of the proposed \$40 million in funding to the Kansas Departments for Aging & Disability Services for housing infrastructure matching grants.

Homelessness is a growing crisis across the Sunflower State and one that is not limited only to urban areas. Sedgwick County and other communities are being overwhelmed by the negative impacts of a growing homeless population, including stunted economic growth, high utilization of public services by unhoused Kansans, and increased costs for local hospitals. The most recent estimate indicates that 2,500 Kansans are unhoused in the Wichita-area alone. This one-time funding would provide necessary support to local governments to allow them to connect unhoused Kansans with crucial services and housing to end the cycle of homelessness.

SB 542, which was recently introduced, outlines what this grant program could look like if adequate funding is appropriated to KDADS in order to establish the housing infrastructure grant matching program. More specifically, SB 542 would require local governments to use any funds received for the building or improvement of shelters and the provision of wraparound services for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, while also ensuring that local governments address homeless encampments in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Wraparound services are a crucial part of a comprehensive plan to address homelessness as they equip individuals with the tools necessary to successfully transition out of homelessness for good. Additionally, SB 542 ensures that local governments truly have a stake in the outcomes for homelessness programs receiving these funds by requiring a dollar-for-dollar local match for state funding, while also utilizing claw-back provisions if these requirements are not met.

In closing, this critical funding would pave the way for the program described in SB 542. This is more than just responsible legislation. This is an opportunity for the State of Kansas to provide

March 18, 2024

Page 2

funding to ensure that local governments have the necessary resources to address not only the plight of unhoused Kansans, but also the far-reaching negative effects of homelessness on our communities and taxpayers.

Thank you for considering our testimony in this matter.

Sincerely,



Ryan Baty, Chairman
Commissioner - Fourth District



Sarah Lopez, Chair Pro Tem
Commissioner – Second District



Peter F. Meitzner
Commissioner – First District



David T. Dennis
Commissioner – Third District



Jim Howell
Commissioner – Fifth District