

Police Chief Gordon Ramsay  
City of Wichita Police Department

February 20, 2017

Dear Members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee,

I am writing reference HB 2352 and am requesting your consideration at how current statutes are interpreted in regard to police officers. Currently, police officers in Sedgewick County with misdemeanor juvenile records involving theft or crimes considered “dishonest” are prohibited by the District Attorney from being affiants in cases they investigated. These new rules have evolved over the last five years based on interpretations on federal disclosure laws on witness credibility. Because of this, we are unable to hire candidates with juvenile records of “dishonesty.” Most people believe a misdemeanor juvenile record is private and will not follow and haunt them into adulthood. That is not the case. Many youth go through diversion programs with the support of their parents or guardians thinking the crime won’t be on their record – another widely held false assumption.

This is an important issue because the juvenile brain is impulsive and doesn’t understand long term ramifications of bad decisions. It’s simply part of growing up and let’s be realistic, there are two categories of kids; those kids who got caught doing something wrong and those who didn’t get caught. A couple of examples that are prohibiting us from hiring candidates today are a 13 year old who stole a hair brush and a 16 year old who stole a beer.

I have a list of potential police candidates who would make excellent police officers because of their life experiences. They can relate better to the struggles many people are facing in our society because they have lived it. They faced adversity and grew up understanding the life struggles many face in today’s world (such as being raised by a single parent making minimum wage).

I have found the current statutes also disproportionately impact poor and people of color; the very people we are trying to recruit into police work. Additionally, I have yet to find another state in this country where a juvenile act for a minor crime prohibits them from being an affiant in court because the juvenile records are private.

I’m respectfully asking you consider language in today’s juvenile statutes to allow for misdemeanor juvenile records to be sealed - as most people believe they are, so that the simple mistakes our kids make today do not follow them into adulthood.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Gordon Ramsay

Wichita Police Chief