



Testimony on HB2484

Submitted To

The House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

By

Kansas Department of Corrections

February 3, 2020

The Kansas Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to offer a perspective on the proposed changes in HB2484. We are neutral on the bill as proposed.

HB2484 proposes to increase to 50 percent the amount of good time incarceration credit allowed for crimes committed on or after July 1, 2020. Current law limits this credit to 15 or 20 percent, depending on the severity of the crime. The Kansas Sentencing Commission estimates this would result in a decrease of 150 prions beds by the end of FY2021 and by 2,020 by the end of FY2030.

Consideration of this policy change is important because the current public policy in Kansas as it relates to crime and punishment confronts our citizens with a prison system, and more comprehensively a criminal justice system, which is stressed and over capacity.

Kansas' community corrections probation programs are working with the same financial resources as in fiscal year (FY) 2013. Our prisons house more persons than we have capacity, requiring the use of contract beds at county jails and out of state. Within our prisons we lack the resources to provide the programs and treatment needed to change inmate behavior, returning them to the community without the skills, education, and training needed to improve the safety of the public upon their release. Once an inmate releases, they are met by parole staff who serve 21% more offenders than in FY15, with the same level of resources. With these systemic challenges, it should not surprise anyone that the five-year average from FY2015-2019 shows that 64.5% of admissions to KDOC facilities are condition violators (persons unsuccessful on supervision in the community).

If the will of the Committee is to advance this bill, here are some areas we recommend be considered.

- Enactment of HB2484 provides an incentive to the inmate population that could favorably impact the environment and safety within our prison facilities. Inmates who have more to be gained from following the rules, refraining from engaging in disruptive behaviors, and participating programs designed to help them change behavior and/or gain job skills, can positively impact the safety of our employees and other inmates. Further, practicing these behaviors within the confines of a

prison increase the probability that the inmate can apply them in the community upon release, improving the safety of our communities.

- Our understanding is that Kansas provided the opportunity to earn 50 percent good time prior to the adoption of the sentencing guidelines in 1993. Perhaps the increases in prison population experienced since that policy change is one indication that the pre 1993 policy was an effective tool.

In closing. We appreciate that the Committee, and the Legislature as a whole, are discussing the public policies of Kansas as they relate to the criminal justice system. We will strive to be a resource to you as you continue your policy work.

Thank you