

This past month Douglas County, in partnership with the United Way of Douglas County, Lawrence Douglas County Health Department, the Lawrence Chamber, and a host of community human services agencies and advocates approved a strategic plan to reduce poverty in our community.

The goal of this plan is to *“foster an equitable Douglas County economy by implementing systems based solutions to reduce local poverty and discrimination and to expand access to opportunities so all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.”*

In order to achieve this goal, the community health plan has set a related objective to *“reduce the incarceration of Black and American/Indian Alaska Native residents.”* This objective directs our local criminal justice leaders to develop strategies, administrative measures, and policies aimed at restoring access to forms of personal identification, including but not limited to drivers licenses, directly associated with an individual’s ability to provide options for verification of identification in compliance with the terms recognized and associated within this bill, as well as with terms associated with a previous offense(s). The opportunities include, but are not limited to accessing housing, health care, child care, food support and employment.

House Bill 2192 offers meaningful improvements to easing access to replacement driver’s licenses, or other necessary forms of personal identification for our justice-involved community members seeking opportunities to survive and thrive in Kansas communities. Douglas County and its human services partners support this bill and hope it will be favorably considered by the Kansas Legislature during the 2021 session.

Jill Jolicoeur, Assistant County Administrator, Douglas County, Kansas

Lea Roselyn, Community Impact Director, United Way of Douglas County