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**Testimony to the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice in Opposition of  
House Bill 2147  
February 9, 2021**

**Chair Jennings and Members of the Committee:**

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office opposes **HB2147**. As with HB2146, we oppose the early release of drug offenders simply because there is a concern about bedspace in our prisons.

**HB2147** would allow a severity level 2 drug offender to be released early. The stated goal, as with HB2146, is to free up bed space in our prisons. But the current bedspace projection for FY2021 is that they will be under capacity by 1287 inmates. Given the last several years of projections, which show overpopulation, we fail to see the urgency to reduce bedspace. While the COVID-19 pandemic is largely responsible for this, the fact remains that there is sufficient bedspace.

Our experience in Johnson County is that drug crimes are not harmless crimes. We have had teenagers shot over the sale of THC vape cartridges. We have had occasions where someone went to buy marijuana and instead decided to forcibly take the drug from their dealer. It happened in our county in April of last year. The drug dealer was killed by the buyer. We have had situations where the seller decided to rob the buyer. These types of activity happen frequently in the Kansas City Metro area. These are not victimless crimes.

Severity level 2, 3 and 4 offenders are in possession of larger amounts of drugs (with an intent to distribute). These are not simple possession crimes. Severity level 3 and higher are those who could be cultivating an illegal product as well. Research shows there is a high likelihood – greater than 50% - they will offend again once released from custody.

It would be helpful to know how many inmates meet the required criteria in the bill. How many are incarcerated for a severity level 2 through 5 drug crime or serving a sentence for a primary crime that is a severity level 2 through 5 drug crime and no other offense? These types of crime are often associated with other serious felony offenses.

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With the current reduction of the prison population we feel that legislation such as this sends the wrong message to the public. We would ask the committee not recommend this bill favorably for passage.

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