



Testimony on HB2673

Submitted To

The House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

By

Randy Bowman, Executive Director of Public Affairs
Kansas Department of Corrections

February 15, 2022

On behalf of Secretary Zmuda, I appreciate the opportunity to offer this testimony from the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) on the proposed changes in House Bill 2673. We support the bill as proposed.

Modification of Kansas' sentencing laws for drug offenders is one policy option for the legislature to manage the size and cost of the state's prison population. As proposed, these sentence modifications for persons convicted of drug crimes are projected by the Kansas Sentencing Commission to reduce the population in Kansas prisons. This would be accomplished by placing those same persons on felony probation supervision instead of sending them to prison. Based on the felony conviction, we assume all will be sentenced to supervision by community corrections rather than court services.

As has been discussed in other meetings and hearing, the prison population in Kansas has declined significantly during the coronavirus pandemic. However, in the prior twenty years the population increased from just under 8,000 at the end of January of 2000 (female 474, male 7,573, total 7,987) to a pre-pandemic number of over 10,000 on March 1, 2020 (female 913, male 9096, total 10,009). Yesterday the adult facility population was 8,301 (695 female, 7,606 male).

The current 10-year Kansas Sentencing Commission population projections do not indicate a rebound to pre-covid levels, however if they could rebound remains an open question. This bill would provide the legislature with a tool to manage this specific population differently, and potentially reduce future facility population.

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