



Testimony on SB8

Submitted To

The Senate Judiciary Committee

By

Kansas Department of Corrections

January 26, 2021

The Kansas Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to offer a perspective on the proposed changes in Senate Bill 8. We support the bill as proposed.

SB8 proposes to modify current law on good time credit and program credit earned by residents of adult correctional facilities. For crimes committed on or after July 1, 2021, good time credit will be calculated as 25% of the prison part of the sentence for a person felony and 40% of the prison part of the sentence for a nonperson felony an increase from current rates of 15% or 20%. The bill would also increase the amount of program credit from 120 days to 150 days for those successfully completing programs offered by the KDOC.

The Kansas Sentencing Commission estimates that enactment of SB8 would result in a decrease of 86 adult prison beds needed in FY 2022. By FY 2031, a decrease of 564 beds would be experienced. That reduction would be beneficial to our ability to safely and effectively house, manage and provide programs and services to correctional facility residents and could also create cost avoidance from building more beds in the long term.

We support SB8 because it promotes improved behavior among correctional facility residents. Those who follow the rules and complete identified programs, earn their way home sooner. They do so by demonstrating behavior that improves facility safety, while practicing those same behaviors before returning to the community to be our neighbors, co-workers and friends. This proposed increase in the incentive for good behavior is an effective means to reduce prison population over the next 10 years, while those who choose not to change their behavior continue to serve their sentence. As a result, limited public resources are more effectively focused on those who are higher risk to reoffend in a facility or after release.

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