

HB 2031 TESTIMONY
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WICHITA POLICE DEPARTMENT

1/25/23

Good afternoon and thank you all for this opportunity.

The city of Wichita is a great place to live, work and play but it experiences the same violent crime that many large cities experience across the country. While our efforts to stop violent crime continue to evolve, our resources are focused on the most violent offenders in our community. Unfortunately, many who are committing violent crimes within our city involving firearms are already prohibited from possessing a firearm due to past criminal convictions. It is our belief more should be done to hold these offenders accountable for their complete disregard for the law and the violence they expose to our citizens. This is why the Wichita Police Department supports HB 2031.

A recent example would be a case that happened early last year. In February 2022, two suspects went to a home and had a dispute over drugs with two other people. One of the suspects, who was prohibited by law from possessing a firearm, brought a firearm with him. During the dispute, the suspect is alleged to have shot and killed the two others he was arguing with. He is alleged to have stolen a gun and other property as he fled the scene. The suspect was charged with 2 counts First Degree Murder, Capital Murder, Aggravated Robbery, Criminal Possession of a Weapon and Criminal Threat. After he was charged through District Court, a victim from an unrelated case came forward and identified this same suspect as the person who shot him in 2021. The victim in that case survived and the suspect has now also been charged with Attempted Murder in that case.

This undeterred behavior is not isolated. In 2022, the Wichita Police Department made 335 arrests for a felon in possession of a firearm. Of the 335, 40 were arrested multiple times for possessing a firearm while prohibited in the same year. Also in 2022, 55 arrests were made for a violent felony where the suspect was in possession of a firearm while prohibited.

The statistics show that many are undeterred by the threat of our current laws which they choose to ignore. By passing this bill, we will be holding our most violent criminals more accountable for their actions and hopefully deterring others from ignoring the law and reaching for a gun to commit violent acts in our community.

Thank you.