

January 24, 2023

Submitted to the Chairman and Members of the Committee in Support of HB2073

Submitted WRITTEN-ONLY Testimony of Sheriff (Ret) of the Johnson County Sheriff's Office, Currie Myers, PhD, MBA in SUPPORT of HB2073

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In recent years, the criminal justice system has seen a well-documented increase in fees imposed on defendants by criminal courts. Today, many states and localities rely on these fees to fund their court system or even basic government operations. [Evidence supports](#) that an over-reliance of fees creates a major [barrier to people re-entering](#) society after a conviction. They are often unable to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars in accumulated court debt. Often that debt leads to incarceration or license suspension, it becomes even harder to find employment to continue to pay down the debt.

The Problem:

[According to studies](#) the use of fees does not improve public system and the fees also fail at efficiently raising revenue due to the high cost of collection and enforcement. Further, fees are typically imposed without regard to the defendants inability to pay. From a law enforcement perspective, resources dedicated to collecting and enforcing fees could be better spent on efforts that actually improve public safety because enforcement efforts divert law enforcement from their core responsibilities.

Fees are intended to raise revenues. Often, they are automatically imposed and bear no relation to the offense committed. In most cases, fees are intended to shift the costs of the criminal justice system from taxpayer to defendants, who are seen as "users" of the courts. Unfortunately, this is also true with respect to the juvenile court system. HB 2073 is a first step in reducing the over-reliance of fees in the Kansas judicial system. Passage of this important bill will mean that no fees will be imposed on or collected from a juvenile or a juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian.

Fees in the juvenile justice system harm youth and their families and can cause significant financial distress especially to those in lower socio-economic conditions. Even minimal payments may result in the parents having to choose between meeting basic needs, like food and medicine and paying the court fees.

In March of 2016, the [Department of Justice distributed a letter](#) to state and local courts on the enforcement of fines and fees in criminal justice proceedings, where they provided the following guidance to juvenile court systems: "Fines and fees in juvenile courts can be economically debilitating to children and their families and can have an enduring impact on a child's prospects."

This bill is an important step in the reduction of overburdensome fees on our citizens. Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony in support of HB 2073.