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**Testimony Regarding HB 2021
House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
Submitted by Marc Bennett, District Attorney
Eighteenth Judicial District**

Chairman Owens and members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address HB 2021.

I have documented in previous testimony this session--outlined below--concerns brought to my attention by prosecutors around the state regarding the current state of the juvenile justice system in Kansas since the implementation of SB367 in 2016. The current system can address juveniles who commit very serious crimes and those at the other end of the spectrum who commit non-violent, minor crimes. The kids in the middle are the concern. The overuse of the child in need of care system and foster care to send kids in this category is of primary concern. The language added in Sec. 2 (g) and Sec 3 (h), requiring collaboration should be an improvement.

HB 2021 seeks to add some flexibility to case length limits won't fix but should help concerns re the current, ineffective case length limits.

Perhaps the biggest positive in HB2021 is the discussion in Sec 8 regarding the funding of community programs -- something promised in 2016 when SB367 was first implemented.

As the committee takes up HB2021, I'll refer the members to my testimony offered earlier this session to the House Corrections and Child Welfare Committee wherein I identified 8 ongoing concerns with SB 367: (1) the lack of short-term alternative placements for juvenile adjudicated of certain types of crimes; (2) the unduly restrict 45 day maximum out-of-home placement limits; (3) the impact of the 45 day max detention limit on conditional release violations; (4) 7 days per month earned discharge credit under the expansive definition of "successful compliance"; (5) the adverse impact that case length limits have on success of juveniles placed on probation; (6) the impact that an unrelated adult conviction will have on a juvenile adjudication; (7) the lack of mental health treatment options; and (8) the final impact of Motions for Adult Prosecution.

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As the legislature works HB2021 and as other bills may be introduced regarding juvenile justice, I encourage any effort to add more options and more flexible options for practitioners and judges in the juvenile courts of this state. Increase case length limits, increase detention limits, increase treatment options in the communities, increase residential options (as an alternative to foster care) and adding respite options for families of juveniles who are working with treatment.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Bennet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marc Bennet
District Attorney

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