



United Community Services of Johnson County

In-Person and Written Testimony in Opposition of House Bill 2430

Julie Brewer, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

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Executive Director

Julie K. Brewer

Date: February 28, 2023

Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director
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Chair Awerkamp and Members of the Committee on Welfare Reform:

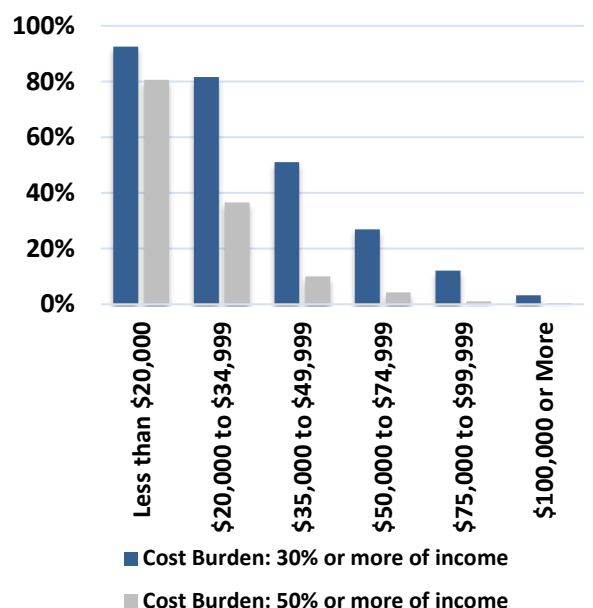
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **opposition of House Bill 2430**. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding area. UCS leads the KS-505 Continuum of Care on Homelessness which serves Johnson County.

UCS believes in the importance of supporting policies, programs and services that are invested in the success of our community’s most vital resource - its people. **House Bill 2430 – the proposed “Safe Cities Act” mandates state-wide criminalization of homelessness and compels local enforcement by restricting access to critical funds intended to support those experiencing homelessness.** House Bill 2430 targets and penalize those in our community who are among the most vulnerable and, by putting further conditions on funding supporting homelessness, weakens the very resources available to address and prevent homelessness in our communities. The mandated enforcement of public camping and sleeping orders or ordinances included in House Bill 2430 **impinge on the local control and Constitutional home rule authority** of all Kansas jurisdictions throughout the state and will burden counties and cities – urban, rural, and suburban – **with additional costs** associated with arresting and prosecuting those who are unhoused.

There are many factors that can result in an individual or family becoming unhoused. Participants in the Johnson County 2022 Homelessness Point in Time Count shared that chronic health conditions, physical disabilities, and mental health conditions were factors that had made it difficult for them to remain housed, and nearly 30% of Johnson County’s unhoused population became unhoused while fleeing domestic violence.

The growing disparity between housing costs and income is another factor contributing to homelessness. Johnson County, like most parts of the country, is experiencing historically high housing costs. Those at lower income levels are most impacted by the high cost of housing. As the chart indicates, **80% of households** with annual incomes under \$35,000 pay **30% or more of their income on housing**. When

Housing Cost Burden by Income Level in Johnson County in 2021



housing costs consume so much of a household's income, even one unexpected expense could result in a family becoming unhoused. More than half of those who are unhoused in Johnson County reported that they are employed.

2021 Short-Term Shelter Beds and Units in Johnson County

- 10 units for families
- 4 units for women and families
- 15 units for adults and families fleeing domestic violence
- 24 beds for justice-involved adults
- 30 beds for adults during cold weather only
- 0 year-round beds for adults

While Johnson County saw a **35% increase** in its unhoused population between 2021 and 2022, options for those seeking shelter continue to be inadequate. **House Bill 2430 offers no solutions for short term shelter or a path for housing stability, but instead erects additional barriers for our community members experiencing homelessness, and the agencies partnering to house them.**

UCS and the agencies of KS-505 CoC work in close collaboration with Johnson County and its municipalities to provide much needed resources and supports for our unhoused community members. **House Bill 2430 undermines local efforts** to design and coordinate housing solutions that work best in our County and communities. **UCS opposes House Bill 2430.**

Sources: 2021 KS-505 Point in Time Count; U.S. Census American Community Survey 2021 1- year estimates