

Don Hymer, Chair

Laura Kelly, Governor

March 4th, 2024
Testimony on HB 2698

Submitted to Senate Judiciary

By Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee of Kansas

The Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee (JJOC) is established in K.S.A. 75-52,161 and tasked with several items related to juvenile justice reform, to include guiding and evaluating the implementation of the changes in law. The JJOC appreciates the opportunity to offer a perspective on the proposed changes in House Bill 2698.

The JJOC Legislative Subcommittee and the JJOC Chair, Support HB 2698.

JJOC appreciates the opportunity to provide information regarding HB 2698, which addresses juvenile offenders to leave a juvenile correctional facility for certain types of programming and educational activities. The JJOC is committed to data driven, evidence-based policies that increase public safety, and hold youth accountable. While we acknowledge there are valid concerns in the years following passage of SB 367, and challenges in the system need to be addressed, any legislative efforts must be data driven and evidence based. As the following will demonstrate JJOC supports HB 2698.

JJOC supports an evidenced based approach to support risk reduction and reintegration of youth in detention. Behavioral health, education, and employment are some of the highest risk factors for those reintegrating into the community. Therefore, JJOC supports the initiative to offer more opportunities to address these existing risk factors, safely and effectively by allowing youth to attend programs outside a secure facility. Research has consistently found positive results for enhanced programs relating to employment and education. A positive step to increasing a youth's chance of success is allowing a youth to attend programs outside a secure facility and connecting them to the community prior to their release. By allowing youth to establish the skills and tools they will need in the community, similarly as adults are allowed to do, we can only increase their chances of success.

JJOC looks forward to being a part of the policy-making process and to fulfilling our statutory charge.

Sincerely,

Lara Blake Bors
Legislative Subcommittee Chair,
Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee (JJOC)