

To: Representative Colloton and the House Judiciary Committee  
From: Stephen M. Howe, Johnson County District Attorney  
Date: February 1, 2012

Re: **Testimony in support of HB 2498**

Representative Colloton and members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on HB2498. My name is Steve Howe and I am the District Attorney in Johnson County. I am here today testifying in support of HB2498.

The Johnson County District Attorney's office has had a mental health diversion plan for nearly 10 years. We have experienced no logistical, evidentiary or legal problems by implementing this policy.

Implementing a mental health diversion program has allowed my office to develop a consistent pattern in assessing the needs of the offender and the victim and in determining what appropriate sanctions should be imposed. Use of traditional probation or supervision officers for mentally ill offenders is many times unsuccessful and frustrating for all involved. Developing a program where supervision is conducted by trained professional in the mental health field can insure better oversight and appropriate responses to the needs of the offender and the community.

There has not been any additional cost or time associated with the implementation of this program. Our statistical data indicates that 17% of the inmates in our jail have some form of mental illness. The State has also reduced the number of beds dedicated towards inpatient treatment for those who have serious mental illnesses. Giving prosecutors the ability to provide a mental health diversion can serve the best interest of the community and the offender.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. If you have any additional questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 913-715-3015.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Howe  
Johnson County District Attorney

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice  
Committee  
2012 Session  
Date 2-1-12  
Attachment # 1-1