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House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

Testimony on House Bill 2453

Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stuart Little and I am the lobbyist for the Kansas Community Corrections Association (KCCA).

Community corrections agencies are thirty-one statutorily mandated programs in each part of the state, governed by county commissions and community advisory boards for both adult and juvenile offenders. They provide cost-effective community-based supervision instead of prison for adult and juvenile offenders as offenders are increasingly more severe and high-risk. The courts and sentencing guidelines determine whether an adult offender is assigned to regular probation (through the courts) or intensive supervised probation with graduated sanctions in a community corrections program. Juveniles are sent to community corrections by district courts through the juvenile offender placement matrix. Some agencies also serve as intake and assessment.

The Kansas Community Corrections Association is the voluntary association comprised of twenty-eight community corrections agencies and affiliated juvenile services groups. I am here today representing these members.

The KCCA supports House Bill 2453 to provide a funding option for local intermediate intervention programs. Provided the authority is optional and not mandatory, local advisory boards could impose a fee on participants in the programs. We appreciate the language that also provides for a service option to juveniles who are unable to pay the fee.

The intent of repeated language in the bill is not clear stating: “such fees shall be used to supplement existing grant moneys and shall not be used to supplant the amount of the grant made to such county by the secretary of corrections.” Is the intent to require this local fee must supplant any non-Department of Corrections grant money and thus not increase the overall funding, and the fee cannot supplant state funds and thus increase the overall amount of funding. The working and intent is ambiguous to us. Additionally, the same language references “county” imposing the fee. The bill provides that authority to “the appropriate juvenile corrections advisory board in each judicial district” and the reference to “county” would not be accurate.

Finally, we appreciate the benefits of “skin in the game” when an offender has to pay a fee. Total revenue from these fees will be comparatively minor, however, while the burden on many low-income juveniles offenders and their families will add another demand on a tenuous situation. We note the services delivered to juveniles in trouble could be funded from the millions in savings from closing out of home placements.