

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
(785) 296-7522
jeff.pittman@house.ks.gov



1108 S. BROADWAY
LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66048
(913) 912-3459

JEFF PITTMAN
41ST DISTRICT

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Chairman Jennings and to the rest of the Kansas House Corrections committee--

I urge you to vote yes and pass HB2551 out of committee. We need to ensure our correctional workers will not have their positions privatized in our great state of Kansas.

As one of the bipartisan co-sponsors of HB 2551, I represent Leavenworth House District 41. Many of my constituents work in the Lansing Correctional Facility; other constituents are families of those incarcerated. Our community understands the needs, challenges and demands that go into the many operations inside a prison. We see the impact of good programming for prisoners, we understand the safety needs for our workers, and the impact policy can have on the local operations.

Imprisonment is useful for protection for the public, punishment and rehabilitation of the criminal. Private corrections have little use for rehabilitation as the more prisoners, the more money to be made. We do not compensate judges by the number of convictions. By keeping state control of correctional workers and operations, we establish in statute that draws a clear line that Kansas is not a state that seeks 'for-profit' justice and incarceration.

This bill is important for my community. This bill also goes to help maintain a well-qualified corrections workforce that is more stable and safe. Many in the current correctional workforce have a good length of history as state. This bill gives clear intent on the part of the state to those correctional workers that their work is valued. This will aid in retention and this is important to guarantee the investment we are making in the new facility at Lansing.

When considering whether this statute is necessary for the intent, we can refer to current statute that only applies to inmates from another state, specifically 75-52,133:

"Prohibition of certain local and private prisons. (a) Except as authorized by Kansas statute, no city, county or private entity shall authorize, construct, own or operate any type of correctional facility for the placement or confinement of inmates from any agency of another state.

(b) The provisions of this section shall not apply to: (1) Facilities used exclusively for placement or confinement of inmates from an agency of the federal government; or (2) regional, city or county jails used exclusively as such jails and as places of detention for inmates, prisoners or fugitives as authorized by K.S.A 19-1917, 19-1930 or 75-5217, and amendments thereto."

We can also refer to another statute, K.S.A. 75-5206. This provides "the secretary shall have authority to order the housing and confinement of any person sentenced to the secretary's custody to any institution or facility herein placed under the secretary's supervision and management or to any contract facility, including a conservation camp." But this just ensures the secretary is the one managing the inmates.

The bill under consideration firmly establishes that the Secretary of Corrections/Administration could not privatize the specified corrections activities without first going to the Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Rep Jeff Pittman

Leavenworth, KS HD #41