

## **Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee**

Senator Bud Estes, Chair

### **Testimony on House Bill 2465**

Gregg Burden, Director

Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office

**March 14, 2018**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on Federal and State Affairs. I am Gregg Burden, Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office (KCVAO) is privileged to support the quarter million veterans who live in the State of Kansas. Our mission is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The KCVAO is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The KCVAO fully supports House Bill 2465 authorizing designated agencies a drug screening program. Due to the vulnerability of our veteran's home residents we believe a drug screening program will improve patient care and be positive for our agency. Unfortunately, illegal drug and prescription drug abuse is not uncommon in the health care and nursing home industry and a drug testing program can help identify potential or current staff members that are impaired or have drug problems. We believe that a drug screening program is an important component of our employee screening program and helps protect our residents from harm.

We also believe that this program will improve other risks associated with substance abuse:

- Worker turnover can be reduced because substance abusers change jobs more frequently
- Productivity is improved because substance abuse decreases worker productivity
- Reduced employee absenteeism since substance abusers are more likely to miss work

This program will be a practical step forward for our agency as we strive to provide the best possible care and services to our deserving veterans. By instituting a drug screening program our goal is to prevent and/or discourage illegal drug usage in our workforce while also improving the workplace environment with lower absenteeism, improved productivity and lower employee turnover. This will ultimately result in an improvement of the services and safety of our residents.

Implementation of a drug screening program is important to our agency but also comes at a cost. Screening a potential or current employee could cost the agency up to \$50 per test. We believe that the cost is not prohibitive for our agency and think it will be money well spent. The associated benefits mentioned before far outweigh the minimal cost of the drug screening. One drug related incident at our veterans homes would put our reputation, credibility, and licensing at risk. It's important that we do everything possible to mitigate this risk.

On behalf of the KCVAO, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your continued support. I look forward to working with the Committee on Federal and State Affairs and other parties as we move forward working together helping veterans and their dependents. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectly,

Gregg Burden  
Director  
Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office