



United Community Services of Johnson County

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Valorie Carson, Community Planning Director
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Dear Chairman Wilborn and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 150**. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region. We are also the lead agency for the **Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness** and regularly collaborate with homeless service providers, including domestic violence agencies.

The Continuum of Care conducts a one-day count of all households experiencing homelessness within our county each January to better understand who is experiencing homelessness locally, their needs, and gaps in services. **In the 2018 point in time count of homelessness, almost half of households experiencing homelessness in Johnson County Kansas were doing so because they were actively fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault. 50% of all children who were homeless in the county were homeless due to domestic violence in their families.**

UCS is committed to ending homelessness in our community and emergency shelter beds for those who are fleeing domestic violence and sexual assault make up most of our year-round shelter. Once households have acted to ensure their immediate safety and the safety of their household's members, they must then turn around and reestablish housing.

This can be a challenge – not only do they need to consider where they will be safe, but they are also often faced with debts and past evictions related to fleeing. **More than two of five households who were homeless because they were fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault in 2018 reported that they had had an eviction that now affected their ability to regain and maintain stable housing. SB 150** would reduce the likelihood that debts and past evictions related to fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault would be a barrier to regaining permanent housing once the household has established safety. It would also reduce the likelihood that those experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault might need to choose between living without fear and abuse or maintaining stable housing for their families.

UCS as the Continuum of Care's lead agency advocates for policies that support survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their families establish stable housing where they can live free of violence and abuse.