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Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee in Support of HB 2447
May 14, 2020

Chairman Wilborn, Vice Chairman Rucker, Ranking Member Miller, and Committee Members,

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office asks you to support HB 2447. This bill would provide an increase in efficiency in court proceedings by allowing the use of two-way electronic audio-visual communications in certain instances. The use of this equipment saves time, enhances public and officer safety, and saves money – all hallmarks of good government.

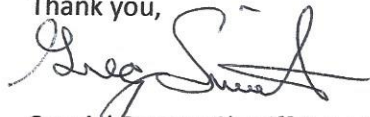
Not having to physically transport a defendant from the county jail to the courtroom for certain hearings would allow for a more timely and efficient process in the court. Detention deputies would save time by not having to physically escort a defendant to a transport vehicle. A physical transport requires that certain protocols are observed, such as a search of the transport vehicle to make sure there is no contraband or weapon concealed in the vehicle. It would also mean that the defendant does not have to be searched for contraband and/or weapons. It also takes time to transport the defendant from the detention facility to the courthouse. The use of two-way electronic audio-visual communications would reduce the time needed to get a defendant in front of a judge and increase efficiency.

If a defendant does not need to be physically transported to the courthouse both public and officer safety are enhanced. Prisoner transports are one of the most dangerous procedures for detention deputies. It requires close physical contact with the defendant by the deputy due to safety searches that are required to make sure the defendant is not carrying contraband, a weapon, or an item that may be used to assist in making an escape. If the defendant is appearing on video this is not necessary. The defendant does not leave the secure facility. The risk of escape is greatly reduced as is the risk of a battery on an officer. Another aspect is that not having to transport the defendant in a vehicle eliminated the possibility of a vehicular accident on the way to or the return from the courthouse. Everyone's – defendant, deputy, and public – safety is enhanced.

Finally, not having to physically transport a defendant saves money. It eliminates the use of a transport vehicle which means that vehicle will not accrue mileage as quickly and it will save money on gasoline and vehicle maintenance.

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office supports HB 2447 for all the reasons mentioned and we would ask for the support of the committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "S".

Special Deputy Sheriff Greg Smith
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