



Testimony on HB2147

Submitted To

The House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

By

Randy Bowman, Executive Director of Public Affairs
Kansas Department of Corrections

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On behalf of Secretary Zmuda, I appreciate the opportunity to offer this written testimony from the Kansas Department of Corrections on the proposed changes in House Bill 2147. We support the bill as proposed.

As proposed, these modifications to allow certain drug offenders to submit an application for early release to the Prisoner Review Board (PRB) after having served 50% of the prison portion of their sentence. This would reduce the population in Kansas prisons by 59 at the end of fiscal year 2022 according to projections from the Kansas Sentencing Commission.

Modifications to Kansas sentencing laws for drug offenders is one option to manage the growth that has occurred in this state's prison system in the last twenty years that increased from just under 8,000 in at the end of January of 2000 (female 474, male 7573, total 7,987) to a pre-pandemic number of over 10,000 on March 1, 2020 (female 913, male 9096, total 10,009). While this growth represents all policy decisions of this and prior Legislatures, for all types of crime, amending penalties imposed upon drug offenders as a means to reduce future populations seems to have common interest among multiple constituencies.

If enacted, the PRB estimates this bill would result in an increase of 450 hearings each year that would be required for each application to the board. Also, those granted release would increase the number of persons being supervised by local community corrections programs who receive the majority of their funding from grants administered by KDOC. Both would need additional resources and could offset any potential savings from 59 fewer persons in prison.

In closing. We appreciate that the Committee, and the Legislature as a whole, are discussing the public policies of Kansas as they relate to the criminal justice system. We will strive to be a resource to you as you continue your policy work.

Thank you