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House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice,

My name is Marquetta Atkins and I am the Executive Director of Destination Innovation Inc which is a hub of youth leadership development, that is home to our programs Progeny, Root the Power and Camp Destination Innovation.

My testimony is supportive of HB2215 and creating accessibility to food for ALL Kansas who fall within the financial guidelines. I am going to focus on work with our youth group Progeny. Progeny is a youth/adult partnership focused on reimagining the juvenile justice system and reinvestment into community based alternatives. But, let me clear working with marginalized youth and communities I encounter inequities and food insecurities daily.

In order for an individual to successfully reintegrate into society, it requires a person to be able to secure basic needs such as housing, employment, food and healthcare= yet they always seem like the biggest hurdles. Denial of basic needs creates barriers that inhibit people from getting back on the right track and becomes a catalyst for recidivism.

It is time that we get the impacted residents and youth in Kansas out of survival mode and grant them accessibility to food. According to the National Institutes of Health, 91% of people released from prison have reported facing food insecurity. In my own work with Progeny, we have had to create an emergency fund for our young people impacted by the system to have accessibility to money for basic needs including food. Hunger puts youth into survival mode, survival mode puts you in a mindspace to take more risk, and those risks typically lead to reincarceration and it's time for this to stop. Legislation has to take some accountability in the archaic and ill functioning laws that are created that add to the disenfranchisement of marginalized communities and the youth that try to exist in them.

It is time for us to DO better by our young people and stop holding them accountable for systems and adults that are making poor decisions that impact them.

For these reasons, I urge support of HB 2215 to ensure ALL Kansans have access to the resources they need to thrive.