



KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF COURT SERVICES OFFICERS

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
Hon. Stephen Owens, Chairman

February 16, 2019 – 1:30 PM
Room 152 S

Stephanie Springer, President for Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO)
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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2654

Chairman Owens and members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on behalf of the Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO) in opposition to HB 2654. I am Stephanie Springer, and I am the current President for Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO) and a Chief Court Services Officer 27th Judicial District in Reno County. The Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO) represents over 340 officers across Kansas.

Court Services Officers supervise most adult and juvenile offenders on probation in the State of Kansas. Court Services also handles Child in Need of Care cases and Domestic cases for the State. The mission of the KACSO is to challenge, educate, support and advocate for the membership by promoting fellowship and professionalism, providing relevant training opportunities, and maintaining communication with all members.

KACSO stands in opposition to HB 2654 as we believe it encumbers the transfer process while weakening local control and hindering our ability to make meaningful, fact-based decisions on behalf of Kansans as Court Services Officers. The details and scenarios of each case and supervision are unique to the facts and persons involved. Shifting the power to the courts to dictate whether Court Services Officers transfer a case or not will bog down the system and make it harder to serve our communities.

The mission of the Kansas Association of Court Services Officers is to challenge, educate, support and advocate for the membership by promoting fellowship and professionalism, providing relevant training opportunities, and maintaining communication with all members. The organization will further this mission by encouraging collaboration with our Court Services Officers and professional organizations and by recognizing member excellence.

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For instance, if a court makes the decision to transfer a case and then the offender moves yet again, we will have to go back to court to once again get the transfer approved. Offenders habitually move as they work to find steady jobs and living arrangements after release and requiring that courts approve a transfer will be an unnecessary and tedious step to achieve what our Officers are already tasked with doing. Additionally, this provision takes away discretion from the supervising entity who is more knowledgeable about the resources and background of the offender, and our Officers are better equipped to make a decision based on the persons involved. Because Community Corrections is not funded for misdemeanor cases, the court will not know the supervising details of another probation.

As to the level of supervision, our current structure already decides the level of supervision based on our risk needs assessment. We do not believe it will be a more effective process to let judges decide on the level of supervision when we already have a statutory mechanism for determining the level of supervision of an offender. This statutory mechanism works and should continue to be followed according to Kansas law.

Giving these decisions to the courts will take time and resources to obtain the correct information. We worry that Defense counsels are not going to spend time obtaining this information and advocating for their client's transfer. Our officers not only get to know the offenders, but we know their circumstances and propensities. This relationship gives us the tools to make well-informed decisions about transfers and our offenders.

As for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Kansas Department of Corrections and the Office of Judicial Administration, our Officers already have criteria for determining many of the items listed in 1-7. There is no need to add more parties and stakeholders for a service in which we already provide. While these criteria may change from judicial district to judicial district, we believe that local control is the best means to serve our communities and the offenders.

Although we disagree with this bill because it takes away many of our fundamental roles as Court Services Officers, we also do not agree that dual supervision is the best route to improve efficiency and serve Kansans. Dual supervision will not only bog down the efficiency of transfer decisions but will also contradict the idea of local control while taking away many of our roles as probation officers.

For these reasons, we stand in opposition of HB 2654, and we ask that you do not pass this bill favorably out of committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of KACSO.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Springer, President
Kansas Court Services Officers Association

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