



March 12, 2024

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce and our nearly 1,500 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only testimony in support of SB 415, AN ACT concerning crimes, punishment and criminal procedure; creating the crime of organized retail crime and providing criminal penalties for violation thereof; relating to theft; increasing penalties for theft of certain property; relating to the Kansas racketeer influenced and corrupt organization act; including organized retail crime in the definition of racketeering activity; relating to the attorney general; authorizing the attorney general to prosecute crimes that are part of an alleged course of criminal conduct that occurred in two or more counties.

SB 415 would create the new crime of organized retail crime, which would be a severity level 5, nonperson felony, and become part of the Kansas Criminal Code. Prosecution for organized retail crime could be brought in a county where at least \$1 in aggregate retail market value of merchandise is taken, received, sold, or purchased. Under the bill, theft of property by deception that is, refunds, money, or merchandise from a retailer with an aggregate retail market value of \$3,000 or more, would be a severity level 5, nonperson felony. The bill would also add organized retail crime to offenses under the Kansas Racketeering Act. The Attorney General and county or district attorney could concurrently prosecute violations of the Kansas Racketeering Act and crimes that are part of an alleged course of criminal conduct that occurred in two or more counties.

The Chamber supports this legislation as organized retail crime has become a problem our retail members experience. This type of crime raises prices for consumers, causes losses for businesses, and poses public safety risks for employees and the general public. The culprits of these acts are brazen in their approach and actions in large because they see little risk and almost no consequence for their crimes. SB 415 would change the value proposition for these bad actors.

We encourage the Committee to report SB 415 favorable for passage.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins