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House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

Testimony in Opposition to
House Bill 2087 and House Bill 2088

February 7, 2017

Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stuart Little and I am the lobbyist for the Kansas Community Corrections Association (KCCA).

Community corrections agencies are thirty-one statutorily mandated programs in each part of the state, governed by county commissions and community advisory boards for both adult and juvenile offenders. They provide cost-effective community-based supervision instead of prison for adult and juvenile offenders with lower severity level offenses (although the offenders are increasingly more severe and high-risk). The courts and sentencing guidelines determine whether an adult offender is assigned to regular probation (through the courts) or intensive supervise probation with graduated sanctions in a community corrections program. Juveniles are sent to community corrections by district courts through the juvenile offender placement matrix. Some agencies also serve as intake and assessment.

The Kansas Community Corrections Association is the voluntary association comprised of twenty-eight community corrections agencies and seven affiliated groups. I am here today representing these thirty-five member agencies.

Community corrections agencies are the frontline in the implementation of the new juvenile system in Senate Bill 367. We are working through those transitions and the potential impact on staff and resources. House Bill 2087 and House Bill 2088 must be understood in two ways. They are symbolic of the great success of the Senate Bill 123 treatment instead of incarceration policy set many years ago. The program works by treating offenders and diverting them from prison. However, that success drives the interest in expanding the program. Expansion of the number of offenders in the program only works well when it is accompanied by expended funding to treat offenders and supervise them. If we continue to expand the Senate Bill 123 system without expanding funding, we eventually put the program at risk. The only result is swift and expensive increases in incarceration costs.

I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.