



JOHNSON COUNTY DISTRICT COURT ADMINISTRATION
STATE OF KANSAS • TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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Testimony of

Katherine Stocks, Court Administrator
Kansas 10th Judicial District

HB 2704

Committee on the Judiciary
Thursday, March 3, 2016
3:30pm, Room 112-N

Good afternoon members of the Committee. My name is Katherine Stocks, and I am the Court Administrator for the Kansas 10th Judicial District in Johnson County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 2704 the Judicial Branch salary adjustment bill.

I cannot express enough the tremendous work that is performed every day by Kansas' judicial branch employees. That is why I am honored to be testifying as part of this group of dedicated court employees that, despite being compensated far below market wages, diligently perform the vital tasks that create a clean, safe, and friendly environment that improves public safety; attracts and retains business; and improves the tax base through alternatives to detention.

As you know, the Kansas Judiciary's portion represents only one percent of the entire state of Kansas budget. Due to unification of state and county courts, the state generally contributes funds for judicial branch salaries, while county governments provide capital and operating budget funds.

The bill before you today will help to address some of the key issues we face in attracting and retaining qualified candidates. Due to the low pay our staff receive, when interviewing, we must address salary immediately; rather than face offer rejections once qualified candidates are informed of the pay scale.

We regularly lose staff to the County and local municipalities. For example, just two weeks ago, we lost a stellar clerk to the County. This employee was offered a promotion to become a judge's administrative assistant, which would give her about \$2 an hour more than she was making as a trial court clerk II. At the same time, she was offered a paralegal position with our District Court Trustee's office—which is County paid through fee funds. The paralegal position is at market rate and the Trustee's office was able to offer her a \$5 an hour pay increase. There was no way that

court could compete with a \$10,000 raise. Market rate pay alone is not the only disadvantage we have in recruiting and retaining personnel. The County guarantees raises to staff at 3% annually and provides better benefits than the state. Bottom-line: when we make a decision to provide for our families, market rate wages, raises and superior benefits win.

Another example, is the common occurrence that when a county-administered court services officer position becomes available, our state employees immediately apply. The pay disparity in court services is stark. A county-paid supervisor—who oversees up-to eight people is paid more than a state-paid Chief Court Services Administrative Officer who oversees nearly eighty managers, supervisors, and line staff. Even if county-paid staff wanted to take on high-level leadership roles, there are only disincentives due to the increased responsibility and pay discrepancy.

Finally, we have concerns that stretch far beyond the simple aspect of pay. While we have instituted measures to try and improve morale, there is no replacement for our staff to be able to meet the basic needs for themselves and their families. When it comes time to pay bills and put food on the table, our staff struggle. Yes, the state provides HealthyKids and robust paid-time-off, but base compensation does not pay for groceries, rent, or gas.

We are all in this together and it is time to acknowledge that we do not provide financial stability to our employees. I am disheartened by how many of our employees must take second jobs to make ends meet. These second jobs are not due to an extravagant lifestyle, instead, working multiple jobs is often the only way employees can be assured financial stability. I can look around this room knowing that there are hardworking individuals here that are living paycheck to paycheck. Being a public servant is an honor, but shouldn't be a burden.

I thank you for your time and implore you to move quickly to approve HB 2704, the Judicial Branch salary adjustment bill.

I am available for questions at this time.