

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony with you this morning.

My name is Aaron Leonard. I have been a Kansan since I was approximately 6 months old, a veteran of the United States Army and a father of two teenage children. Today, I am appearing on behalf of citizens recognizing the need to exercise their constitutional right to use firearms. Because we Kansans deserve the right to protect ourselves and our loved ones, I strongly support this resolution.

Criminals often take advantage of vulnerable law-abiding citizens. According to the KBI, Kansas had over 13,800 violent crimes reported in 2022, including the rapes of 1,281 women. That is a 17.5% increase over the 10-year average. Crime is rising.¹ Our citizens must retain the fundamental right to defend themselves against these threats.

When I was young, my grandmother's property was a repeated target of burglary. I recall going to her house to find her sitting on her porch with a firearm by her side. As with many Kansans, firearms were a critical part of her ability to defend herself, her property and her family.

As a father, I fear the day when my children may be a target of violent crime. They deserve the right to defend themselves. They deserve the right to do so by bearing arms.

Unfortunately, not all lawmakers understand the importance of the right to bear arms for self-defense. At a time when illegal aliens, who do not share Kansan values or our culture of peace and respect, flood into our country and our state², it is increasingly important for our citizens to be able to defend themselves.

Our sons and daughters, our grandmothers, and all vulnerable citizens of our great state deserve to have the right to bear arms remain firmly protected.

¹ <https://www.kansas.gov/kbi/stats/docs/pdf/2022%20Crime%20Index%20-%20amended%20November%202023.pdf>

² <https://homeland.house.gov/2023/10/26/factsheet-final-fy23-numbers-show-worst-year-at-americas-borders-ever/>

This resolution (HCR 5020) helps protect Kansans from reckless lawmakers who do not understand the needs of Kansas citizens. I give thanks to those lawmakers who support it.

Sincerely,
Aaron Leonard
Father and Citizen