

714 S.W. Jackson St., Suite 300  
Topeka, KS 66603



Phone: (785) 296-3317  
Fax: (785) 783-6950  
Kdoc\_pub@ks.gov  
www.doc.ks.gov

Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

To: The Honorable Troy Waymaster, Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations

From: Jeff Zmuda, Secretary  
Kansas Department of Corrections

Date: February 27, 2025

Re: Testimony on House Bill 2237

Mr. Chairman, Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on House Bill 2237, which relates to the employee award and recognition program. This bill would authorize hiring, recruitment, and retention bonuses; increase the limitation on such award or bonus to \$10,000; eliminate the Secretary of Administration's authority to adopt rules and regulations; and require such secretary to submit an annual report to certain legislative committees concerning such awards and bonuses.

As I believe you are aware, the Kansas Department of Corrections has experienced staffing and hiring challenges over the recent years, though the situation is much improved today. Legislation such as this would assist us in attracting skilled and talented candidates and would help compensate for a lower base salary. I believe that the ability to offer bonuses that recognize staff performance are motivational for our workforce. While we have a healthy employee recognition program, the current \$3,500 bonus cap currently in place does not allow for much flexibility if an employee were to receive more than one award. Furthermore, the bonus cap has not been changed in years, despite rising inflation. A \$10,000 limit would also allow for effective and meaningful recruiting and retention bonuses. (Please note that the governor would have to approve any bonus of more than \$3,500 proposed by the Kansas Department of Corrections.) Corrections agencies in other states have successfully used bonuses for recruitment and retention, and I believe this bill would be a worthy addition to our efforts in those areas.

I also believe that the requirement of a yearly legislative report would allow the legislature to provide oversight and guidance, ensuring that the change in statute would be properly managed by State of Kansas agencies. This would establish statutory safeguards to prevent abuse or favoritism.

We support this bill.

Again, I thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony to you today.