



LAWRENCE, KANSAS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Memorandum

To: House Committee
Date: February 26, 2025
Re: HB2293

I am Deputy Chief Adam Heffley, a licensed Part 107 pilot from the Lawrence Police Department, and I come forward today in opposition to House Bill 2293. At LPD we operate a robust UAS program with 25 FAA certificated pilots. We utilize various devices for crime scene mapping, large scale incident management, crimes in progress, search and rescue, assisting the local fire department and supporting officer safety during crisis events.

Recently, Lawrence Police flew a device into a residence that, unbeknownst to us, had explosives set up with the intention to kill first responders. We were able to use the drone to identify this fatal threat prior to sending any human beings into the house, undoubtedly saving the lives of first responders on scene. These devices put time and distance between first responders and potential threats. They also provide first responders with information about people and places they are approaching, which increases the safety of the public. These tools allow us to see if a person is hidden, armed and a danger, or alternatively unarmed and possibly in need of help.

The U.S. market has made positive steps toward a goal of filling the needs of first responders but won't be in a position to adequately do so for several more years. The devices that are offered can cost three or four times as much as devices already on the market and available to us today. The U.S.-made devices also still fall short of the technical abilities, available in foreign produced ones, that are mission critical for first responders. We ask that you not hamstring law enforcement's ability to safely serve the community.

Our department has a strong policy that acknowledges the potential issues that come with a UAS program and the equipment we utilize. We have, with intention, established protocols for our use of drones to ensure that they are not connected to sensitive department and law enforcement systems while still allowing us to secure video evidence and keep people out of harm's way.

CHIEF OF POLICE
Rich Lockhart

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Due to an inflationary economy that has led to rising personnel costs and decreased discretionary spending dollars, we have no available funding to replace the devices we currently operate. Our drone budget was significantly decreased in 2024, is \$0 for 2025, and will be \$0 again in 2026. An unfunded mandate forcing a change in equipment in the next five years would essentially end our program that has unquestionably saved lives. We ask you to not vote to limit our ability to mitigate risk to our first responders and to the public we serve. The lives of the law enforcement officers and the people of Kansas depend on it.

Adam Heffley
Deputy Chief of Police

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