

**Statement to the House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Opposing HB 2353
by Melody Rayl, Trustee
January 25, 2012**

Chairman Brunk and members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee, my name is Melody Rayl and I want to thank you for allowing me to testify today in opposition to HB 2353. I come before you on behalf of Johnson County Community College, where I am currently serving my second term on the Board of Trustees. I also come before you as a veteran, having served six years on active duty in our nation's armed forces – as a former law enforcement officer, having spent 20 years in uniform as a municipal police officer – as a former faculty member at JCCC - as a practicing attorney – and, perhaps most importantly, as the mother of three school-age children. It is precisely because of that diverse life experience and perspective that I am here today to urge you to vote against the mandates contained within HB 2353.

Should HB 2353 be enacted, locally governed institutions like Johnson County Community College will be faced with a Hobson's choice – we will be forced to either expend financial resources installing and staffing security devices at nearly 100 entrances located across our campus; or, sacrifice what we believe is in the best interests of the safety of the literally thousands of students, faculty and staff members who spend time within our walls.

While some Kansas public entities may find themselves situated a considerable distance from the nearest law enforcement first responders, others are well equipped to immediately respond to any potential emergent situation. At JCCC, our commissioned campus police officers have received extensive training in firearms and other use of force issues – including appropriate response to a reported active shooter. I can be sure of that because I spent five years as a firearms and use of force instructor at the regional police academy located on our campus.

We are uniquely prepared in that regard – and understand that others across the state of Kansas may not be so fortunate. Yet it is precisely for that reason that I urge this body to leave the issue of concealed carry within local governmental buildings to those who are best positioned to address the circumstances of such facilities and the desires of their constituents. The question of whether JCCC students should be permitted to carry concealed firearms within our classrooms should be decided by the locally elected officials who have been entrusted to make such decisions by the citizens we serve.

Johnson County Community College is a place of teaching and learning – and I have been privileged to have been a part of its educational endeavors for nearly three decades – as a student and alum, as a criminal justice professor, as a parent whose children attended summer enrichment classes, and now as a member of its governing body. I am very well acquainted with the institution and its policies. I, along with my fellow Trustees, are uniquely qualified to



discern what is best for our students, faculty and staff. Just as the locally elected officials of Sedgwick County have made the decision that concealed carry within their public buildings is the right choice for them, we should have the opportunity to decide what is right for JCCC.

There are few more important and pressing issues than ensuring the safety of our children – and those decisions are weighty indeed. Given my experience and training – were a JCCC police officer to respond to a report of a potential active shooter in a classroom in which I was teaching, I would want him/her to know immediately upon arrival who the suspect was – that would be the one with the gun. If shots are to be fired and life and death decisions are to be made, I trust such decisions to those who are trained and equipped to make them. But that should be our choice – just as others may choose what they believe is best. It is for that reason that I urge you to vote against imposing what we view as a one-size-fits-all, unfunded mandate upon institutions across the state, who are best equipped to choose for themselves the size and style that best fits their unique needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns to the committee. I would be pleased to respond to questions at the appropriate time.