

Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Senator Ralph Ostmeyer, Chair

Testimony on Senate Bill 242

Gregg Burden, Director

Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office

January 21, 2016

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on Federal and State Affairs. I am Gregg Burden, Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office (KCVAO) is privileged to support the quarter million veterans who live in the State of Kansas. Our mission is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The KCVAO is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The KCVAO fully supports Senate Bill 242 which expands the list of safety sensitive positions to include all positions within our agency. We operate two state veterans' homes and these two facilities alone provide daily care for more than 200 veterans and their eligible dependents. As we care for America's heroes, we strive to hire and retain dependable qualified staff. Their care and safety is entrusted to us. We believe a drug screening program is positive for our agency as it will be a step in ensuring we hire drug free staff to improve patient care, support a safe work environment and comply with state and federal requirements of a drug free work environment. Unfortunately, illegal drug and prescription drug abuse is not uncommon in the health care and nursing home industry and a post-offer drug testing program is mission essential.

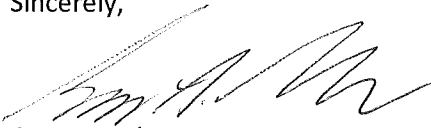
This program will be a practical step forward for our agency as we strive to provide the best possible care and services to our deserving veterans. By instituting a drug screening program our goal is to prevent and/or discourage illegal drug usage in our workforce while also improving the workplace environment with lower absenteeism, improved productivity and lower employee turnover. This will ultimately result in an improvement of the services and safety of our residents.

Implementation of a drug screening program is important to our agency but also comes at a cost. Screening a potential or current employee could cost the agency up to \$50 per test. We understand the

cost and believe that the cost is not prohibitive for our agency and think it is an important cost of doing business. We believe benefits mentioned before far outweigh the minimal cost of the drug screening. One drug related incident at either of our veterans homes could quickly become a protection from harm situation for a resident and could create a large liability for the state while putting our reputation, credibility, and licensing at risk. It's important that we do everything possible to mitigate this risk.

On behalf of the KCVAO, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your continued support. I look forward to working with the Committee on Federal and State Affairs and other parties as we move forward serving America's heroes. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Burden', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Gregg Burden

Director

Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office