

To: Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Amanda L. Stanley, General Counsel

Date: April 18, 2020

RE: Support for HB 2447

I want to thank Chairman Wilborn and the members of the Committee for affording the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2447.

HB 2447 is being proposed by the Judicial Branch to increase the use of two-way electronic audio-visual communication in municipal court.

In talking with cities, multiple cities of all class sizes have already used their home rule authority to allow for the use of audio-visual means for appearance in municipal court under various situations. Other cities, who do not currently use audio-visual communication, support this as an option to help decrease the necessity of tying up officers with the transport of prisoners or, even more importantly in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, as a way to increase the safety of court staff, the public, and the defendants. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced cities to quickly technologically evolve. While it has not been easy, as we face a very uncertain future, it has been extremely necessary to safely preserve the function of government.

As noted, several cities already do this under their home rule authority. We therefore ask that the bill be amended to make clear that this modification of the statute is to supplement the current use of audio-visual communication under local ordinance and not somehow imply that the municipal ordinances currently in place are no longer valid. In light of current events and the very real need to use audio-visual communications in the interest of public safety, we would ask that this Committee adopt the amendment below so there is no possible confusion about the validity of current ordinances.

We ask that the following language be added to HB 2447 before it is recommended favorably to the full Senate for its consideration: All existing ordinances and charter ordinances relating to the use of audio-visual communication in municipal court shall remain in effect until amended or repealed by such city.