



KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF COURT SERVICES OFFICERS

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
Hon. J. Russell Jennings, Chairman

February 8, 2021 – 1:30 PM
Room 546 S

Mike Smith, Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2192 Authorizing court services officers and community corrections officers to provide a certification of identification to offenders

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and this committee for extending the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 2192. My name is Mike Smith and I here today providing testimony on behalf of the Kansas Association of Court Services Officers (KACSO). I am the Chief Court Services Officer in the 23th Judicial District covering Ellis, Gove, Rooks, and Trego Counties. KACSO represents over 340 officers across Kansas.

HB 2192 is an important bill for KACSO. Allowing Court Services Officers the authority to provide a certificate of identification where an offender can go to the local department of motor vehicles and obtain a State ID and would provide us with a great opportunity to help offenders who have been released from jail that have no identification. Lack of identification means that the offender would have issues obtaining a job, in addition to other financial and practical hurdles. The Kansas Department of Corrections is already afforded a similar authority as you can see in the bill.

It takes numerous documents to prove your identity, including a social security card or birth certificate. These documents can take many weeks to obtain, which creates unnecessary delays and complications for offenders trying to comply with the terms of probation.

The mission of the Kansas Association of Court Services Officers is to challenge, educate, support and advocate for the membership by promoting fellowship and professionalism, providing relevant training opportunities and maintaining communication with all members. The organization will further this mission by encouraging collaboration with our Court Services Officers and professional organizations and by recognizing member excellence.

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I want to explain a scenario that occurred where this would have been very helpful. I was supervising a man in the winter of 2019 who was homeless. He was chronically homeless and carried a backpack with everything he owned. This was the first week in February and the weather was bitter cold. Temperatures were near zero degrees. The gentleman I was ordered to supervise was released from jail after being arrested on a bench warrant. The jail had issued the man a check for the balance he had on his books, roughly \$100.00. First Call for Help in Hays provided him with a motel room for one night to assist him and from there he would have to find his own way. This man attempted to cash the check at multiple places and was unsuccessful as he had no identification. I spent hours calling banks, check cashing outlets, and trying to find a way to help him so he would have money for food and shelter. He checked in the following day and I was working on getting some form of aid for him for the next night as he was required to stay in our community until his next court date. He was to contact me later that afternoon. I was able to secure him a motel room, however, he had given up and decided he would fend for himself. This man had a check for \$100.00 and ended up sleeping outside in subfreezing temperatures because he was unable to cash it. He had no food and was spending most of his time on the corner holding a sign asking for money from people passing by.

This became an issue for me again just this month. I have a current client who was passing through town returning to his home in New York, from California. He was traveling by bus and got off in Hays as they were picking up passengers. He left his belongings on the bus as he was just getting off for short period of time. He ended up missing the bus. His wallet, and belongings left with the bus. He ended up breaking into cars for spare change and was ultimately arrested. He was able to contact his mom and he now has a copy of an expired driver's license he is using as ID. This individual is not eligible for a Driver's License as it is suspended in New York. He is living in our community attempting to start over and having a valid ID is necessary for him to succeed.

Prior to my career with Court Services, I worked for the Kansas Department of Corrections as a Parole Officer I. As a Parole Officer, I had access to and used the Certificate of ID form regularly, as inmates frequently were released without identification. The need for this authorization is not exclusive to the Kansas Department of Corrections. HB 2192 would eliminate one barrier to success that our clients face.

HB 2192 is a recommendation from the Kansas Criminal Justice Reform Commission (KCJRC) and was vetted with the members of that committee. We would ask that this committee support the recommendation from the KCJRC and allow Court Services Officers to provide a certificate of identification.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today and I am glad to stand for any questions.

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