



Testimony on HB2139

Submitted To

The House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

By

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February 10, 2021

On behalf of Secretary Zmuda, I appreciate the opportunity to offer this written testimony from the Kansas Department of Corrections on the proposed changes in House Bill 2139. We support the bill as proposed.

As proposed, this bill would reduce the number of months of the penalty imposed by courts for convictions on certain drug offenses and increase others. This would reduce the population in Kansas prisons by 80 at the end of fiscal year 2022 according to projections from the Kansas Sentencing Commission.

Modifications to Kansas sentencing laws for drug offenders is one option to manage the growth that has occurred in this state's prison system in the last twenty years that increased from just under 8,000 in at the end of January of 2000 (female 474, male 7573, total 7,987) to a pre-pandemic number of over 10,000 on March 1, 2020 (female 913, male 9096, total 10,009). While this growth represents all policy decisions of this and prior Legislatures, for all types of crime, amending penalties imposed upon drug offenders as a means to reduce future populations seems to have common interest among multiple constituencies.

When taking into account the different custody classification levels, genders, and needs of 80 persons, this is potentially beneficial toward avoiding future prison costs and improves the ability to socially distance residents to help mitigate spread of the coronavirus among residents in the facility, staff working at the facility and those residents who release into the community. But the projected reduction in prison population not a sufficient number to reduce current prison expenditures.

In closing. We appreciate that the Committee, and the Legislature as a whole, are discussing the public policies of Kansas as they relate to the criminal justice system. We will strive to be a resource to you as you continue your policy work.

Thank you