

**Testimony to House Judiciary Committee
Support of HB2226
February 8, 2021
Wyandotte Economic Development Council**

The Wyandotte Economic Development Council (WYEDC) is a public/private organization with a mission to attract new businesses to Wyandotte County, retain existing businesses, provide workforce solutions for individuals and businesses and market the assets our County has to offer. We support HB2226 which proposes automatic expungement of certain criminal records of individuals who have served their required time and are returning citizens to the County. This is an important step to remove a barrier for justice-involved individuals to gain meaningful employment.

WYEDC finds itself in a unique role between connecting companies who have talent needs and those who have been justice-involved. We are involved in the Unified Government Public Health Department's County Health Improvement Plan, locally known as the CHIP. Based upon the outcome of a 2017 survey of Wyandotte County residents, the number one reason given that prevents individuals from having better health outcomes is jobs and education, closely followed by housing, better health care access and violence prevention.

We are the lead agency for the CHIP Jobs and Education Focus Group that is working to reduce or remove five barriers for all individuals seeking employment, including those who have a criminal history background. Individuals coming out of incarceration must find a job very soon after returning to the community. We believe this legislation will expedite the expungement process, which will help them to gain employment, allow faster re-entry into the community and reduce recidivism.

The jobs are available. In Wyandotte County alone, the number of job ads posted within the last 30 days is 7,846. The jobs encompass several different wage levels and industries – manufacturing, logistics, health, service and retail. We find companies are more willing than ever to hire justice-involved individuals with non-violent offenses, which is a win-win scenario.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in favor of HB2226.

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