

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 2575

**Paul T. Davis
On behalf of the**

Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas

**House Judiciary Committee
February 7, 2022**

Good afternoon Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee.

I am Paul Davis, lobbyist for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas (“the UG”), and I am pleased to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 2575. The UG has a long involvement with the issue of expungement reform and we are very pleased that the Kansas Legislature is considering House Bill 2575. We especially want to thank Representative Pam Curtis from Wyandotte County for championing this important legislation.

As you are probably aware, there have been a cross section of individuals and groups that have promoted expungement and the concept of a clean slate. Wyandotte County District Attorney Mark Dupree and many others have helped craft this legislation. Furthermore, the bill that is before has been vetted by the Kansas Judicial Council.

House Bill 2575 sets up an automated process for the expungement or sealing of criminal records for many Wyandotte County residents, and Kansas residents, that are eligible for an expungement but lack the time or resources to go through the formal expungement process. Many persons who plead guilty to a crime, obtain a diversion, or are convicted in a court of law are eligible for an expungement within three (3) to five (5) years. Despite tens of thousands of Kansans being eligible for an expungement, national estimates show that less than 10% of persons eligible actually pursue and complete the expungement process. This is often because pursuing an expungement requires hiring an attorney, paying court costs, and completing a formal court process.

Through the clean slate process, a person eligible for an expungement can have their offenses expunged automatically. This is not a new concept by any means. Six states have already enacted laws similar to House Bill 2575 and more state legislatures across the country are in the process of considering legislation.

Prosecutors would continue to play a role in this process under the legislation just like they do now. A county or district attorney would be notified of the automatic expungement and would be given an opportunity to object and request a court hearing.

A criminal record that has not been expunged is frequently a barrier to employment, housing, and educational opportunities. By establishing an automatic process, thousands of Kansans can have those barriers removed and help obtain a second chance to better their lives and the lives of their family members.

On behalf of the UG, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony and I ask for your favorable consideration of House Bill 2575.