



**Testimony to Senate Committee on Judiciary
Supporting HB2026
February 10, 2021
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) urges the Senate Committee on Judiciary to favorably pass HB2026 creating a drug abuse treatment program for people on diversion and allowing county and district attorneys to enter into agreements with chief judges and community corrections for supervision. The KC Chamber is a supporter of expanding drug treatment programs in the State of Kansas to improve outcomes for people stuck in the seemingly endless cycle of addiction. Most of us have a family member or friend who has been caught up in the vicious trap of addiction and have seen the damaging effects drugs can have on a person's life.

Expanding drug treatment programs for Kansans on diversion is a great step the Legislature can take to show that is serious in addressing the drug epidemic gripping Kansas and our country right now. And, unfortunately, most experts agree that this crisis has only gotten much worse during the coronavirus pandemic. The KC Chamber supports policies that expand opportunities, when appropriate, for many justice-involved individuals to not end up incarcerated but rather, receive treatment while remaining with their families and gainfully employed. The KC Chamber not only supports policies that help justice-involved individual find employment but are actively engaged in helping our members hire folks who have a criminal record through our Workforce Opportunities for Returning Citizens (WORC) Program. In fact, we have a few employers who flat out say they pretty much do not care what the background is of a person, they just need reliable workers.

As the economy continues to recover from the downturn in 2020 and as more and more folks retire from the workforce, the need for qualified workers will become ever more important. By expanding the opportunities for drug treatment and diversion, we can keep more folks out of jail or prison and keep them employed contributing to the economy and participating in the workforce while addressing the drug crisis in a productive and responsible manner. The KC Chamber supports favorable passage of HB2026 out of this committee.

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