



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

March 18, 2021

Testimony Regarding HB 2077

Submitted by Jennifer Kisela, Deputy Program Director, The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Thank you to the Chair and members of the Committee for the opportunity to address HB 2077. I hope to provide useful context for the bill.

An interbranch, diverse, and representative working group charged with developing policies, recommending legislation, and monitoring data and implementation is an effective vehicle to promote meaningful policies and minimize unintended consequences. In Kansas, the Criminal Justice Reform Commission (CJRC) serves as this working group and is also an integral part of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI).

Throughout 2020, the CJRC explored numerous policies to address challenges, improve proportionality of sentences, create efficiencies, and promote public safety through recidivism reduction. Some policy recommendations require additional discussion and analysis to develop legislation that minimizes unintended consequences. As a result, the continuation of the CJRC is necessary to build upon current knowledge and expertise to advance changes to Kansas's criminal justice system in a thoughtful and strategic way.

House Bill (HB) 2077 will allow the CJRC to continue in order to analyze and recommend improvements for sentencing proportionality, diversion opportunities, and effective supervision practices. Additionally, HB 2077 will provide an avenue for monitoring the implementation of legislation, administrative policies, and data outcomes as a result of JRI in Kansas. Members of the Committee will also see that HB 2077 expands the CJRC membership to include one public defender, bringing the total number of members to 18.

States across the country are using interbranch working groups to make meaningful data-driven changes to their criminal justice systems. Kansas is among those states, having already taken steps to create Kansas-specific solutions. I hope the Committee will favorably consider HB 2077, which represents a continued commitment to data-driven collaborative policymaking.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jennifer A. Kisela'.

Jennifer Kisela

Deputy Program Director, The Council of State Governments Justice Center