



COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

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Senate Judiciary Committee

Written Testimony Regarding House Bill 2121

March 24, 2021

Chair Warren and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shelly Williams and I am the Director of Riley County Community Corrections, an intensive, community-based supervision program. For the three supervision entities in Kansas (Court Services, Community Corrections or Parole) the definition of absconding not only varies from supervision entity to supervision entity, but from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. How an absconder is defined dictates the response by the supervision entity, from re-engaging the offender in supervision to recommending revocation from supervision.

As with any supervision entity, there are multiple reasons why an offender might be considered an absconder. There are instances when an offender changes their address but remains in the area and is classified as an absconder, instances when an offender fails to report, and instances when an offender intentionally flees the jurisdiction. There are (supervision) re-engagement activities that can occur without declaring an offender an absconder if they are not intentionally avoiding supervision.

House Bill 2121 is recommending language that clearly articulates the intentionality of an offender avoiding supervision.

“Absconds from supervision means intentionally avoiding supervision or intentionally making the defendant’s whereabouts unknown to the defendant’s supervising court services officer or community correctional services officer.”

Having participated as a member of both the Criminal Justice Reform and Sentencing Commissions this past year, I am confident the addition of this language will help create consistency throughout the state and the multiple supervision entities in identifying offenders who are intentionally avoiding supervision versus those who can safely remain in their community. A consistent definition will foster consistent supervision practices, thus reducing the amount of time and resources addressing technical violations such as changing an address or missing appointments, versus intentionally avoiding supervision.

Thank you for your time and consideration in adopting the proposed definition in House Bill 2121.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shelly Williams

Shelly Williams, Director, Riley County Community Corrections