

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
From: Chief of Police Bryan Wheelles  
Date: March 8, 2022  
Re: Proponent Testimony on SB 534

I would like to thank Madam Chair Warren and the Committee for allowing the City of Topeka the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on SB 534.

SB 534 enhances the penalties for a violation of criminal possession of a weapon by a convicted felon to presumptive imprisonment when the weapon was possessed during the commission of certain types of violent felonies such as capital murder, aggravated assault, and rape.

Policing is a dangerous and noble vocation. Gun crime enhancements make this extremely dangerous job safer. Gun crime enhancements make all our communities safer. Felons who are not allowed to even carry a firearm, should not be receiving probation for subsequent violations of law.

In circumstances, as outlined in SB 534, the denoted felon group have made a conscious decision to continue to disobey the law in a further demonstration of their lack of ability to change their behavior and evolve into law-abiding citizens. Probationary sentences are founded in the philosophy of getting a chance to change personal behavior and enhance accountability. Statistical information demonstrates that a significant amount of new gun crime is committed by previously prohibited parties. The underlying violent felon group, listed in SB 534, are among the most concerning. Situations in which law enforcement engage in repetitive arrests of armed felons just to result in probation sentences are akin to playing with a lighter in a puddle of gasoline. You will get people hurt, just a matter of when. SB 534 seeks to reduce an unnecessary cycle of repetitive risk with armed prohibited criminals currently being seen in all our communities across this state.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue. I urge you to pass SB 534 to the full Senate for its consideration.

*Chief Bryan Wheelles*

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