



**Testimony to Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Supporting HB2401
March 25, 2021
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) urges the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to favorably pass HB2401 enabling the Secretary of Corrections to enter into public-private partnerships to boost educational and reentry programming for returning citizens. The KC Chamber, and its 2,000 members and Board of Directors, is a supporter of policies like this to ease the burden on Kansas' prisons, encourage better outcomes for returning citizens, and to increase the number of available workers for Kansas businesses. The business community of not only Greater Kansas City, but the State of Kansas as a whole, has pledged support for the Lansing Correctional Facility (LCF) Career Campus (Career Campus) concept.

The Career Campus concept is a collaborative effort among the Kansas Chamber, the Greater Wichita Chamber of Commerce, the KC Chamber, private employers and businesses, educators, non-profits and the Departments of Commerce and Corrections to establish an educational campus inside LCF to boost educational capacity, teach hard and soft skills to make returning citizens employable with market value credentials, and to infuse support from private industry to train, educate and eventually employ these individuals. The goal of this coalition is to not only find success at Lansing but to replicate this model and other facilities in the state. This type of public-private partnership would be a cutting-edge concept that the State of Kansas can lead the nation and be an example of responsible and effective corrections and rehabilitation.

The KC Chamber supports policies that expand opportunities for incarcerated individuals to receive meaningful educational and reentry programming while incarcerated and, accordingly, by receiving education and successfully completing programs, the offender is not only demonstrating rehabilitation but is also taking active steps to make himself or herself employable upon release. Thus, making our communities safer and giving back to society upon release. The KC Chamber not only supports policies that prepare returning citizens to find employment but are actively engaged in helping our members hire individuals who have a criminal record through our Workforce Opportunities for Returning Citizens (WORC) Program. In fact, the KC Chamber's WORC program has already identified employers who are more interested in hiring reliable workers than they are in the background of potential candidates. As the economy continues to recover from the downturn in 2020 and as more and more people retire from the workforce, the need for qualified workers will become ever more important.

Expanding program capacity inside our facilities to ensure successful rehabilitation for incarcerated individuals is a smart investment for the people of Kansas. Expanded quality programming and successful rehabilitation leads to a less likelihood of recidivating and increases the chances of the offender becoming a productive member of society. It also increases the talent pipeline for employers to consider when looking to fill unfilled jobs. The KC Chamber supports favorable passage of HB2401 out of this committee.

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