

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: John Goodyear, General Counsel

Date: March 7, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 189 – Written Only

I want to thank Chairman Patton and the members of the Committee for affording the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 189.

SB 189 will amend current law to further facilitate the sharing of police personnel records amongst law enforcement agencies in the state. K.S.A.75-4379 was passed in 2018 with the intent of increasing transparency in the hiring of law enforcement officers. Creating a mechanism for the sharing of this information, the goal of the legislation was to decrease the likelihood that an officer dismissed from one department for misconduct could find a position to continue that misconduct in another department in another community.

SB 189 would expand upon the statute to include the records of those individuals that were applicants for positions as well, not just those that have been employed by the agency. This greater transparency will be particularly valuable to smaller communities, allowing them to lean on the background work done by other law enforcement agencies. It will also allow agencies to further ensure that the information provided by applicants is consistent across the board – that the applicant is not changing information on subsequent applications to deceive the hiring agency.

Paramount to the safety of our communities and our police officers is trust, and transparency is a necessary component to building that trust. We want to know that our law enforcement officers are doing the right thing to protect our communities. We know that the vast majority of law enforcement officers within the state are doing what is right, but we also want to know that those who are not, are disciplined or removed. This law and the amendments made by SB 189 allow Kansas cities to get better information regarding applicants for law enforcement jobs within their city; helping to identify any bad apples that may exist and making sure they stay out of the barrel.

SB 189 is good for law enforcement and good for our communities. We would ask that the Committee recommend it favorably for passage.