



CITY OF TOPEKA

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To: House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
From: Chief of Police Bryan Wheelles
Date: January 25, 2023
Re: Written Only---Proponent Testimony on HB 2031

I would like to thank Chairman Owens and the Committee for allowing the City of Topeka the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on HB 2031.

HB 2031 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 HB 2031, 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 HB 2031 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. HB 2031 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 HB 2031 to the full House for its consideration.