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Testimony in Support of HB2031 to the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee January 24, 2023

Chairman Owens, Vice Chair Smith, Ranking Minority Highberger, and members of the committee:

The Johnson County Sheriff's Office supports HB2031, just as we supported HB2657 last year. HB2657, was recommended for passage by this committee but did not advance any further. We hope to see HB2031 get through the process this session.

HB2031 targets repeat violent offenders – the worst of the worst. They need to be incarcerated. These are the people that require bedspace in our prisons.

There is good news and bad news when it comes to violent crime in Kansas. According to the latest crime statistics in Kansas (2021) violent crime decreased by 3.4% from 2020. Every category of violent crime showed a decrease.

Violent crime in Kansas has been steadily rising each year since 2014. The decline of violent offenses in 2021, was the first decrease experienced since the upward trend. Despite the drop, the number of violent crimes in 2021 remained 17.9% above the 10-year average.

We also know that those that commit violent crime are a small percentage of criminals, but they are repeat offenders. In other words, a small percentage of criminals repeatedly commit violent crimes. If they were incarcerated the evidence suggests violent crime should decrease. At the very least, they would not be free to commit violent crimes in our communities.

HB2031 would stop the current sentencing trend for violent repeat offenders of concurrent sentencing and instead put into place a consecutive sentencing keeping the worst repeat felons off our streets. It makes good sense.

Current legislative trends are to free bedspace in our prisons. Criteria are frequently changed on what type of convicted criminal should take up a bed. We would suggest that these repeat violent offenders are exactly the type of person that needs a prison bed.

We would ask the committee to report the bill out as favorable for passage.

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