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PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 244

Chairman Patton and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I introduced Senate Bill 244 on behalf of the Attorney General to address a growing criminal enterprise in the state of Kansas. Organized retail crime (ORC) involves large-scale theft with the intent to resale for financial gain.

According to a National Retail Federation report, retailers saw a 26.5% increase in ORC incidents in 2021, and Buy Safe America names Kansas as one of the top 10 states where ORC hits the hardest. The loss of goods and increased prices consumers face as a result are only a small part of the challenge. Eight in 10 retailers surveyed for that NRF reported that the violence and aggression associated with ORC incidents also increased year-over-year.

By allowing the Attorney General's Office original authority to investigate and prosecute any crime that is part of an alleged criminal enterprise that occurs in two or more counties, this legislation attempts to address the potential threat to our communities as well as the loss of goods and increased prices that result from ORC.

ORC is a new criminal enterprise, and this bill is an effort to be active in addressing the threat rather than reactive. I urge your support of SB 244.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.R. Claeys".

Senator J.R. Claeys