



March 1, 2024

Written Neutral Testimony for House Bill 2723

Chairman and esteemed members of the committee,

I am honored to provide testimony on behalf of the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope ("Community of Hope"), a rural homeless shelter located in Leavenworth, Kansas. As the Executive Director of the Community of Hope, I approach House Bill 2723 with a neutral stance, seeking to offer insights into the potential impacts of the proposed legislation on our organization and the individuals we serve in Leavenworth County.

House Bill 2723 aims to award funds to Kansas local governments to be allocated for the building of or capital improvements to congregate and non-congregate shelters. We recognize the noble intentions behind this legislation, as it seeks to address the pressing need for shelter infrastructure across the state. However, we also acknowledge the importance of carefully considering the potential implications and unintended consequences that may arise from its enactment.

The Community of Hope has long been committed to providing shelter, support, and resources to individuals experiencing homelessness in Leavenworth County. We understand firsthand the challenges faced by those who lack stable housing and the critical role that shelters play in addressing these needs. While we applaud efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of shelter services, it is essential to ensure that any legislative measures align with the realities faced by organizations like ours.

One potential benefit of House Bill 2723 is the expansion of shelter infrastructure, including the building of new shelters or capital improvements to existing ones. This could lead to improved facilities and increased capacity to accommodate individuals experiencing homelessness across Kansas. Additionally, the provisions outlined in the bill may create opportunities for additional collaboration between local governments and organizations like ours, fostering a more comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness.



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COMMUNITY
OF HOPE

311 Kiowa • Leavenworth, KS 66048

However, we also have concerns that warrant careful consideration. While shelter infrastructure is undoubtedly crucial, it is just one piece of the puzzle in addressing homelessness. Additionally, there is a risk that without sufficient operational funding, these shelters may struggle to remain open in the long term. The financial strain on organizations operating shelters, particularly in rural areas with limited resources, cannot be ignored. Adequate funding is essential to sustain shelter operations and meet the growing demand for services. We must also prioritize investments in affordable housing and financial support services to address the root causes of homelessness and provide long-term solutions for individuals in need.

In conclusion, while the Community of Hope recognizes the importance of addressing homelessness and supports efforts to improve shelter infrastructure, we urge the committee to approach House Bill 2723 with a thorough understanding of its potential impacts on organizations like ours. We stand ready to collaborate with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that any legislation passed serves the best interests of individuals experiencing homelessness and the communities we serve.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this critical matter. We remain committed to our mission of providing compassion, support, and hope to those in need and look forward to contributing to constructive dialogue on House Bill 2723.

Sincerely,

Myranda Agnew

Myranda Agnew
Executive Director
Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope
W: (913) 702-8108
C: (913) 306-5264