

MINUTES

2023 SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS

November 9, 2023
Room 112-N—Statehouse

Members Present

Representative Francis Averkamp, Chairperson
Senator Beverly Gossage, Vice-chairperson
Senator Brenda Dietrich
Senator Rick Kloos
Senator Carolyn McGinn
Senator Mary Ware
Representative Allison Houglan
Representative Leah Howell
Representative Susan Humphries
Representative Timothy Johnson
Representative Heather Meyer

Members Absent

All members present

Staff Present

Natalie Nelson, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Iraida Orr, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amanda Prosser, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jessie Pringle, Office of Revisor of Statutes
David Wiese, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Gary Deeter, Committee Assistant

Conferees

Jay Rodriguez, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
Amanda Karras, Executive Director and General Counsel, International Municipal Lawyers
Association
Amanda Stanley, City Attorney, City of Topeka
Seth Wagoner, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Chief Fiscal Officer, AIM Strategies
James Whitford, Executive Director, Watered Gardens; Founder and CEO, True Charity,
Joplin, Missouri
Major Jana Kizzar, Topeka Police Department
Sergeant Matthew Rose, Topeka Police Department
Terry Hund, Program Director, Project2Restore
Christina Ashie Guidry, Director of Policy and Planning, United Community Services of
Johnson County

Barry Feaker, CEO, Compassion Strategies; Former Director, Topeka Rescue Mission
Brady Flannery, President, Weaver's Department Store, Lawrence
Sarah Hill-Nelson, Owner, Bowersock Mills and Power Company
David Hawley, Owner, Papa Keno's Pizzeria, Lawrence
Brandon McGuire, Assistant City Manager, City of Lawrence
Paul Webster, Former Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development; Executive Director, Hope Street Coalition, San Diego, California;
Executive Director, The LA Alliance for Human Rights, Los Angeles, California
Scott Ackerson, Director, Social Impact Studio, West East Design Group
Bill Riphahn, Chairperson, Shawnee County Commission
Joe Reitz, Founder, Lawrence Family Promise
Emily Wagner, Executive Director, Manhattan Emergency Shelter, Inc.

Thursday, November 9 All-day Session

Agenda Overview

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and welcomed members, conferees, and guests. The Chairperson encouraged members to consider practical solutions for the issues surrounding homelessness by assessing all possible solutions, identifying core issues and root causes for homelessness, and determining the value of local and state approaches.

Committee Members' Comments on Expectations

The Chairperson invited legislative members to introduce themselves and share their expectations about what they would like to see accomplished in the meeting.

Legal Environment: Court Cases, Legal Restrictions, and Programs

Jay Rodriguez, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, outlined relevant homelessness legal issues ([Attachment 1](#)). He explained homelessness is not a protected legal class, but it is addressed when related to a legitimate government interest, such as public health, safety, sanitation, or aesthetics. He cited several court cases that have addressed homelessness:

- *Sacramento Homeless Union v. County of Sacramento*, 617 F. Supp 3d 1179 (USD CA, 2022), which found states and municipalities are not required to provide housing, food, or sleeping materials.
- *Callahan v. Carey*, 12 N.Y.3d 496, 909 N.E.2d 1229 (2009), a New York City consent decree from 1981 established the city's obligation to provide shelter to all homeless people who needed it "by reason of physical, mental, or social dysfunction." The homeless population's "right to shelter" has not been applied

beyond New York City. Kansas does not have a constitutional provision or state law establishing a right to shelter.

- *Robinson v. California*, 370 US 660 (1962) and *Powell v. Texas*, 392 US 514 (1968), centered on the issue that the status of being homeless cannot be criminalized. In *Robinson*, the Supreme Court found that a person's mere addiction to narcotics, when not engaged in illegal conduct involving narcotics, cannot be criminalized. In *Powell*, the Supreme Court split on whether a homeless man could be punished for public intoxication. Under the Eighth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution*, criminal punishment for involuntary conduct or status is prohibited.
- *Lyll v. City of Denver*, 319 FRD 558 (USD Colorado 2017), concerned the sweep of homeless encampments and search and seizure of personal property by a government entity without due process. The city agreed to a settlement that required a notice prior to sweeps and a system for reclaiming property. Additionally, the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the *U.S. Constitution* protect against unreasonable searches and seizures and the seizing of property without due process, respectively.

Mr. Rodriguez cited a variety of issues related to restrictions on zoned property or narrowly applied nuisance laws and First Amendment restrictions on protected speech involving the solicitation of donations.

Amanda Karras, Executive Director and General Counsel, International Municipal Lawyers Association, appeared virtually and provided further comments on applicable homelessness legal decisions, especially those from the U.S. Ninth Circuit ([Attachment 2](#)). She stated *Martin v. City of Boise*, 920 F.3d 584 (9th Cir. 2019) held the city of Boise, Idaho violated the Eighth Amendment by criminalizing involuntary homelessness, a finding that was also applied to *Johnson v. City of Grants Pass*, 72 F.4th 868 (9th Cir. 2023) when the city of Grants Pass, Oregon enforced anti-camping and park exclusion ordinances. She commented that the U.S. Supreme Court may grant a petition for *certiorari* in the *Johnson* case but, if not granted, those decisions would stand. She discussed other litigation that may modify anti-camping restrictions, noting these cases currently do not apply specifically to Kansas municipal zoning regulations.

Amanda Stanley, City Attorney, Topeka, commented on the city's current discussions on an anti-camping ordinance. She said commercial interests and homelessness advocates have laid out their positions; the City of Topeka is determining the proper way forward.

Answering questions regarding shelter, Mr. Rodriguez replied that currently there are no other federal judicial circuits addressing the issue of anti-camping ordinances pertaining to homelessness presented in the *Martin v. Boise* case. He noted that class-action lawsuits do not require evidence of individual harm. Ms. Karras replied that the Ninth Circuit has yet to define available adequate shelter. Homelessness: The Individuals, Causes, Living Situations, and Demographics

Seth Wagoner, CEO and Chief Fiscal Officer, AIM Strategies, recounted his response to a request to form a Downtown Topeka Safe and Clean Task Force to deal with local homeless issues, specifically vandalism, disruption of businesses, and debris caused by homeless camping in the downtown plaza ([Attachment 3](#)). He listed the Task Force goals, which included

cleaning up the downtown area, partnering with the Topeka Police Department (TPD), tracking vandalism, and taking steps to discourage camping in the plaza. He reported these efforts have been effective in reducing incidents between the homeless population and businesses.

Mr. Wagoner responded to Committee members' questions:

- The Task Force worked with mental health providers in dealing with homeless individuals;
- Building communication with the TPD and their Real-Time Crime Initiative has had a major effect in reducing homelessness issues;
- There are many issues not within the Task Force's goals to address, such as homeless camps relocating from downtown to other parts of the city; and
- AIM owns several businesses in the downtown area.

Committee members commented on the need to find more comprehensive solutions but expressed gratitude for what has been accomplished in the downtown area.

The meeting proceeded with a panel discussion on the causes, living situations, and demographics of the individuals experiencing homelessness. Panel members introduced themselves and gave brief statements about their work.

Barry Feaker, former Executive Director of the Topeka Rescue Mission and presently CEO of Compassion Strategies, outlined three key factors for reaching the homeless: building relationships, creating new opportunities for individuals, and assuring continuity with a structured approach.

James Whitford, Executive Director, Watered Gardens, and Founder and CEO, True Charity, in Joplin, Missouri, acknowledged the complex layers of homelessness and reported his purpose to identify root causes while providing a long-term residential recovery program, a family shelter for mothers and children, an emergency shelter, a respite unit for those discharged from a hospital to finish their recovery, mental health and physical wellness screenings, and a workshop to build responsibility. He noted all of these services move the mission from a dependency model to one that encourages personal responsibility ([Attachment 4](#)).

Christina Ashie Guidry, Director of Policy and Planning, United Community Services of Johnson County, presented statistics regarding homelessness in Kansas and noted 2,397 Kansans were experiencing homelessness on one night in 2022. She describes the Continuum of Care (CoC) process and provided point-in-time numbers for January 25, 2023, and 2022 annual data regarding homelessness in Johnson County. Ms. Ashie Guidry discussed the causes of homelessness and provided insight on what types of individuals experience homelessness. She traced the incremental pressures on vulnerable households that push them out of housing, including: cost-burdened homeowners or renters spending more than 30 percent of income on housing; potential homeowners looking to transition from rental to home ownership; vulnerable populations with special housing needs (traumatic brain injury, intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavioral health issues, physical disabilities, and justice system involved); those experiencing temporary or sporadic homelessness; and the chronically

homeless. She noted the significant rise in unsheltered persons in Johnson County without an increase in available beds to house them ([Attachment 5](#)), ([Attachment 6](#)) and ([Attachment 7](#)).

Major Jana Kizzar, TPD, is the co-lead for Topeka Homeless Initiative and works with a number of city employees and community partners to find a solution for the city's homeless crisis. She explained how the TPD has built relationships with partners to deal with the homeless population. She noted when TPD responds to a call involving a homeless individual, TPD assumes the responsibility of connecting the individual with behavioral health services at Valeo Behavioral Health or possible shelter at the Topeka Rescue Mission, as needed.

Sergeant Matthew Rose, TPD, supervises a small Behavioral Health Unit Crisis Intervention Homeless Outreach and Mental Health Team (Homeless Outreach Team) for the City of Topeka. He explained how the Homeless Outreach Team goes into the homeless camps to create relationships and build rapport with homeless individuals in order to connect them with appropriate resources, such as mental health and rehabilitation providers or the Topeka Rescue Mission for shelter.

Terry Hund, Program Director, Project2Restore, explained how her organization works with community resources to provide a home, medical services, financial recovery, and counseling for the homeless population, especially focusing on those rescued from human trafficking. She recounted the story of one individual and the complex process of addressing her physical, mental, and spiritual health ([Attachment 8](#)).

Panel members responded to Committee members' questions:

- The Homelessness Outreach Team does not arrest homeless individuals unless it involves a warrant or a life and death situation, so as to maintain rapport with the individuals. In the Homeless Outreach Team's experience, about 80 percent of homelessness is caused by drug addiction or mental health factors. The Homeless Outreach Team has been in place for three years and has not received special training. The TPD is the first in the state to have a Homeless Outreach Team. Among the services provided, the Homeless Outreach Team assists homeless individuals with obtaining a city identification card using the police database for identity verification, which allows the individuals to obtain a temporary state identification card, a Kansas drivers license, and Social Security card (Sergeant Rose);
- There are different definitions of homelessness. CoCs define homelessness as having no place to live intended for human habitation. These individuals could be in shelter, on the street, or in transitional housing and have no place they consider their own. School districts use a broader definition of homelessness that includes families that double up in housing (evicted but living with a relative or another family). The state's point-in-time count of nearly 2,400 on one night is almost certainly an undercount of the homeless population (Ms. Ashie Guidry);
- The homeless population is definitely undercounted, as there are homeless encampments the Homeless Outreach Team has only recently encountered or been told about and some that are unknown to them. When moved from the downtown area where services may be more centrally located, homeless individuals typically move in groups to the boundaries along the river or the edges of the park systems and find alternative means to find what they need or

travel to the resources available to them. There are few shelter beds or beds for homeless individuals in mental health crisis. The Homeless Outreach Team immediately connects individuals with available resources (Sergeant Rose);

- Medical debt is a major driver leading people to homelessness (Ms. Ashie Guidry); and
- Housing is not the total answer for homelessness. Supports are also needed (Ms. Hund).

Effects of Homelessness on Communities

The Chairperson asked the panel members to introduce themselves and comment on how homelessness affects their communities.

Brady Flannery, President, Weaver's Department Store, Lawrence, noting Lawrence as a tourist destination, emphasized the need for safety in the Lawrence business district and a desire to develop policies and have them enforced. He commented on behaviors of homeless individuals that he considers offensive and threatening ([Attachment 9](#)).

Sarah Hill-Nelson, Owner, Bowersock Mills and Power Company, a business that operates on both sides of the Kansas River, recounted the threats to her employees at all hours of the day and night by individuals living in homeless encampments and environmental concerns with trash, needles, and other debris in the river. She said additional housing will not address the issues of mental health or drug addiction among the homeless population ([Attachment 10](#)).

David Hawley, Owner, Papa Keno's Pizzeria, Lawrence, also noted the threats on his staff coming from homeless individuals dealing with drug addictions or mental health issues. While Mr. Hawley noted that Lawrence is a compassionate community, he explained that the city has limited resources and solutions. He noted housing alone will not address the root causes of homelessness. Mr. Hawley stated the need for accessible and comprehensive mental health care and substance abuse treatment programs that focus on rehabilitation and support. He expressed a need to have a centralized database to identify needed services, track progress, and help allocate resources where most needed or a central hub where individuals facing homelessness can easily access all available resources. Mr. Hawley noted plans to convert a hotel into a substance use disorder treatment facility ([Attachment 11](#)).

Brandon McGuire, Assistant City Manager, City of Lawrence, appeared virtually. He noted Lawrence is building a homelessness response system. He explained that present services are not scaled to deal with the city's homeless population because other Kansas towns and cities are sending their homeless to Lawrence. He listed the effects on a variety of service providers from this burgeoning population. He recommended enacting a state law prohibiting any agency receiving state funding from transporting people who are facing homelessness to another jurisdiction without ensuring services are available and connecting them to those services as well as increasing state investment, leadership, and coordination in the development of services and facilities to prevent homelessness and enable recovery.

Panel members responded to Committee members' questions:

- Local police support has not been effective in addressing homelessness (Mr. Flannery);
- The Lawrence Police Department (LPD) is so overwhelmed that they find it difficult to apply the laws uniformly to the homeless population (Ms. Hill-Nelson);
- Following the *Martin v Boise* decision, Lawrence adopted an ordinance allowing camping on city property if insufficient beds are available for individuals facing homelessness. The lack of capacity in services, sheltering facilities, and housing from the state down to the local level in Lawrence makes it difficult to meet the needs of homeless individuals; present budget constraints limit what the city can do. The Lawrence City Commission and the Douglas County Commission have a joint resolution committing to working in coordination to end chronic homelessness. In its 2024 budget, the Lawrence City Commission has committed \$2 million out of its general fund budget, \$850,000 of special alcohol funds, and \$1.5 million to \$2 million in residual American Recovery Plan Act funds to be invested in sheltering, outreach, and case management support to address homelessness. The city cannot be the service provider for all communities in Kansas, and state level intervention is needed (Mr. McGuire);
- The LPD leadership and city management team have met with the TPD regarding its Homelessness Outreach Team program and are also looking at other best practices as a first step in expanding access to services. Beginning in 2024, Lawrence is also creating a robust, multidisciplinary outreach team to encourage access to services and recovery (Mr. McGuire);
- Regarding the work with the CoCs, there have been meetings with the City of Lawrence, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, and other behavioral health providers regarding the issue of homelessness. However, there is a need for coordination rather than silos of service (Ms. Hill-Nelson);
- The planned substance use disorder treatment facility would accept insurance and private pay and may consider Medicare and Medicaid at a later date. There is a desire to establish a scholarship program for the uninsured and homeless and a processing center. The services would be provided by qualified mental health providers and qualified and licensed substance used disorder treatment providers (Mr. Hawley);
- There is a need for state legislation to prohibit any publicly-funded organization from transporting people experiencing homelessness across county lines without ensuring capacity at the transported location and increased leadership and investment from the state (Mr. McGuire);
- Regarding mental health and drug treatment services provided through the city or county, a behavioral health sales tax is in place to develop mental health services and rehabilitation. The county-led creation of a crisis stabilization center and supportive housing has been in place for one year, but there has been an increase in those who need long-term stabilization care and inpatient recovery services. The City of Lawrence has invested in sheltering by being the first in the state to build a pallet shelter village. Seventy-five small sheltering cabins have

been purchased and the first community is being developed. The city is working with the only emergency community shelter in Lawrence to develop their capacity and is investing financially so that the organization is prepared to operate the pallet shelter community with 50 beds. The city is also developing a one-stop shop for wraparound services (Mr. McGuire); and

- Although there are 65 unused beds at the shelter, there are various reasons homeless individuals do not want to stay in the shelter and will refuse the shelter that is provided (Ms. Hill-Nelson).

A Committee member described the Housing First treatment modality, noting it requires the individual facing homelessness to enter a treatment program and employment services to move into housing. The Committee member stated the panelists' comments indicate they were advocating for a Housing First program.

A Committee member commented on the need to combine compassion with accountability.

Break; Working Lunch

Committee members continued to hear conferees during the lunch hour.

Lessons from Other Cities and States: Presentations, Panel Discussion, and Question and Answer

Paul Webster, Former Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Executive Director, Hope Street Coalition, San Diego, California; Executive Director, The LA Alliance for Human Rights, Los Angeles, California, attended the meeting virtually and reviewed policies and practices dealing with homelessness ([Attachment 12](#)). He commented on his background experience in Los Angeles and provided HUD data on the unsheltered population compared to the number of available beds from 2007 through 2020. He also provided data on the percentage of individuals self-reporting physical health, behavioral health, substance abuse, or all three by sheltered or unsheltered status. He concluded that present policies and practices have fostered a constituency of dependency. Current government programs emphasizing housing have not reduced the homeless population but have actually increased it. He questioned federal data and recommended developing local data and focusing on treatment, not housing.

Scott Ackerson, Director, Social Impact Studio, West East Design Group, outlined the Haven for Hope model for dealing with homelessness, which provides comprehensive services on a 22-acre campus to address the root causes ([Attachment 13](#)). He explained the initiative offers two options for those admitted to the program: a Transformation Campus (average 900 clients) for intensive integrated residential treatment and the Courtyard (average 650 clients) providing a low-barrier array of services. Both options are evidence-based using best practices. Peer staff is utilized and a continuum of care beyond the campus is provided. He commented that the adverse affects of trauma are a root cause for 54 percent of the homeless population. Mr. Ackerson traced Haven of Hope's budget (on average is 60 percent federal, state, and local government funding and 40 percent private funds), noting a return on funds of 29:1 and

provided data on its local impact on youth and family homelessness in the San Antonio community.

James Whitford, Executive Director, Watered Gardens; Founder and CEO, True Charity, Joplin, Missouri, commented that the increases in housing offered to the homeless have seemed to make the situation worse by increasing attitudes of entitlement and dependency ([Attachment 14](#)). He said the key to success in treating homelessness is to build long-term relationships with homeless individuals.

Bill Riphahn, Chairperson, Shawnee County Commission, commented on the homeless issues facing his community, including homeless individuals camping in county parks and resorting to crime to have a place to sleep and eat. He noted the county has looked at a variety of options to address these issues. The City of Topeka has passed an ordinance that specifies who can camp and where camping can occur. The Shawnee County Commission passed a resolution that requires a 72-hour notice to homeless individuals to move from a campsite. If the individuals leave property behind, it is impounded for 90 days and, if not claimed, is disposed. He stated the jail is 45 to 50 percent occupied by individuals with mental illness who do not belong there. Some of these individuals in jail are awaiting trial and wait long periods of time for a competency evaluation. He suggested establishing an additional behavioral health facility or state hospital in northeast Kansas.

Joe Reitz, Founder, Lawrence Family Promise, described his program that for over 15 years has served 1700 families in Lawrence by matching homeless families with children with local families, primarily through approximately 2000 volunteers. The program incentivizes people to save money by matching their savings upon graduation from the 90-day program. He noted 4 out of 5 families graduate to permanent housing and, out of those graduating, 80 percent remain permanently housed after 2 years. The program receives no government funding.

Panel members responded to Committee members' questions:

- The goal is to offer incentives for individuals to leave their addictions. Alternative or specialty courts could offer treatment instead of jail to address mental health causes for crime (Mr. Webster);
- Haven for Hope puts all support services, including child care, in one location. A public-private partnership is important (Mr. Ackerson); and
- An organization in Wichita is using the True Charity Network tools. Regarding best evidence practices used, research is done with many providers to collect information on successful programs that measure the outcomes on issues such as transitional housing. Case management and therapeutic services are not provided by trained providers; instead, competent, passionate members build personal relationships with homeless individuals. Personal relationships are powerful in providing incentives for change among the homeless (Mr. Whitford).

A Committee member expressed concern regarding some programs that seem to ignore qualified professional services. Another Committee member expressed gratitude for holistic programs that include a spiritual component.

Update on Homelessness Programs; Resources

Committee members briefly recessed from 3:00 to 3:15 p.m.

The Chairperson invited Iraida Orr, Principal Research Analyst, Kansas Legislative Research Department (KLRD), to review current data on homelessness. Ms. Orr provided an overview of the state's homeless programs: Kansas Housing Resources Council; the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and its applications in Topeka, Wichita, Johnson County; the CoC Program; the Housing Trust Fund; and other programs administered by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) and federal initiatives ([Attachment 15](#)).

Ms. Orr also outlined homeless initiatives in other states with data from the 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress ([Attachment 16](#)). Homelessness increased in 27 states and decreased in 23 states and the District of Columbia. Drawing from state data, Ms. Orr noted that four states accounted for more than 50 percent of the total of all people experiencing homelessness: California, New York, Florida, and Washington. She reviewed statutes in states with the highest and lowest rates of unsheltered homeless population.

Ms. Orr referenced other written-only information:

- KDADS Housing Services Memo ([Attachment 17](#));
- Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) McKinney-Vento memo regarding funding for homeless students ([Attachment 18](#));
- KSDE fact sheet regarding the McKinney-Vento Act ([Attachment 19](#));
- KSDE fact sheet regarding McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Title I, Part A homeless set-aside use of funds ([Attachment 20](#));
- KSDE fact sheet outlining the allowable use of American Rescue Plan Act funds for homeless children and youth ([Attachment 21](#));
- Christy McMurphy, Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition with support from other entities, Best Practices and Effective Approaches for Kansas Public Policy to Address Housing Insecurity and End Homelessness ([Attachment 22](#)); and
- Comments on the effect of mental illness on homelessness, Representative Timothy Johnson, District 38 ([Attachment 23](#)).

The Chairperson invited Emily Wagner, Executive Director, Manhattan Emergency Shelter, Inc., to share her experiences sheltering homeless individuals and families. Ms. Wagner stated that providing shelter is the first line of defense in dealing with homelessness. She stated the goal of the emergency shelter is to have permanent housing for families within 60 days, and the shelter has been successful in meeting that goal. Case managers assist with connecting the individuals to all available resources to meet their specific needs. She explained the shelter works with local government, community agencies, law enforcement, and the courts; together, they provide the continuum of care. Ms. Wagner noted, when homeless individuals violate the law, the local police department enforces the law, which can lead to individuals receiving

needed treatment. She noted the Drug Court in Manhattan refers individuals to the emergency shelter, which works with the court to ensure the treatment plans are followed.

In response to a questions from Committee members, Ms. Wagner described how the community members and businesses help meet the needs of the emergency shelter. She noted there is no budget for food, but those needs are met by the community. She stated efforts are underway to have a rehabilitation facility, a detoxification facility, and an inpatient psychiatric facility in Manhattan. In response to the use of peer support at the emergency shelter, Ms. Wagner noted about half of the staff was previously homeless. Beds for single males and families are often full. HUD Rapid Rehousing funds are used to move individuals and families quickly into homes, often using the funds to pay the deposit and first month's rent. When no beds are available, help is sought from churches and the local community center to assist with housing, depending on the reason the individual is unable to be housed at the shelter. The faith-based community is the biggest champion for the shelter, but she spends time building relationships with anyone who can help the shelter. Ms. Wagner stated policies to address homelessness need to be made at the local level.

Committee Member Discussion and Recommendations

The Chairperson invited each Committee member to comment on the day's hearings. A number of Committee members repeated specific information they had garnered from the conferees. The observations of Committee members included:

- Mental illness is a one of the primary drivers for homelessness;
- Offering only housing for the homeless is inadequate, when about two-thirds of individuals facing homelessness need substance use disorder treatment or mental health services;
- The state can help fund drug, alcohol, and mental health treatment and facilitate access to photo identification cards for individuals facing homelessness, but the local communities need to work together to make the policy decisions that will work for their communities to address homelessness. Local control is the key to tailoring effective homeless programs;
- Putting money into the Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Fund and allowing local governments to use those funds for mental health and substance abuse treatment or lowering property taxes could help assist local governments in addressing homelessness;
- Public-private partnerships offer more comprehensive services than services that are siloed;
- Safety is an important factor to consider when individuals facing homelessness are present near commercial locations and in homeless encampments, including closely checking on children in encampments to ensure their safety;

- To address the mental health and substance use issues, shelter, housing, and wraparound services must be provided;
- Affordable housing must always be a consideration in meeting the needs of homeless families;
- Shelters are the first line of defense in addressing homelessness and the state should consider what it can do to support the shelters;
- An effective police department is critical in addressing homelessness. Property rights need to be respected, and there needs to be equal application of the law;
- Conferees were helpful in humanizing the discussion of homeless issues;
- Public agencies need to find ways to simplify processes to help churches, faith-based programs, and non-profit initiatives already in place to address homelessness; and
- There is a need to develop both short-term and long-term goals to address homelessness.

No recommendations were made for inclusion in the Committee's Report to the 2024 Legislature.

Adjourn

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m. No further meetings were scheduled.

Post-Meeting Submissions

After adjournment, Rob Santel, LMSW, Director of Programs, Cross-Lines Community Outreach in Wyandotte County, provided information to the Committee members ([Attachment 24](#)).

Prepared by Gary Deeter

Edited by Iraidia Orr and Natalie Nelson

Approved by the Committee on:

December 29, 2023

(Date)