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STEVE M. HORNBERGER
UNDERSHERIFF

JAMES J. MARTIN, JR.
UNDERSHERIFF

March 10, 2015

To: Chairperson Kleeb, Vice-Chairperson Suellentrop, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Taxation.

Chairperson Kleeb and Committee Members,

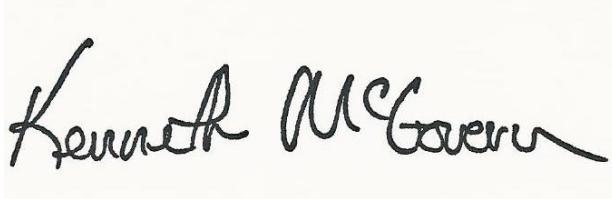
I appreciate this opportunity to address the committee. I am Ken McGovern, Sheriff of Douglas County. I speak today in support of House Bill 2263. It will provide the Douglas County Commission with the option to call an election to ask the voters of Douglas County if they are willing to increase the sales tax one-half cent to construct an addition or remodel the Douglas County jail or other county administrative facilities. An additional county facility hopefully will include some type of mental health crisis center that would provide a less expensive alternative to jail beds.

Our correctional facility is 15 ½ years old with a current capacity of 186 beds. The construction and management style is Direct Supervision, which requires different housing units for the various classifications of inmates. With our inmate population slowly increasing, we implemented an innovative Reentry Program in an attempt to better serve our inmates and reduce recidivism. Over the past several years we experienced a steady increase in the average daily population of inmates. The increase of individuals with mental health issues and of female offenders has been particularly challenging. The growing inmate population forced us to start housing some of our inmates in other jails.

We started to look seriously at expanding the jail to meet current and future inmate housing needs. After discussions with the County Commission and an architect, it was decided to hire experts in the corrections field as consultants to assess our needs and recommend a course of action. The consultants quickly saw that mental health services were a major issue, not only for inmates in jail but for the community as well. The consultants expanded their needs assessment to include the courts, community corrections, and available mental health services. The consultants have yet to complete their study, but it is likely their recommendation may go beyond simply enlarging the jail. It may include other construction or remodeling projects as ways to address the inmate population issue.

Whatever the outcome of the study and the commission's choice of action, Douglas County would like to have the option to ask the voters of Douglas County to increase our sales tax to raise the revenue for whatever project is chosen. HB 2263 gives Douglas County that option. I ask you to support and pass this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth McGovern".

Kenneth McGovern

Sheriff, Douglas County