

**House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
January 26, 2023**

**House Bill 2073
Testimony of the BIDS Legislative Committee
Presented by James Houston Bales
Proponent**

Dear Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

HB 2073 amends a series of disparate statutes imposing fines and fees on people convicted of criminal offenses in the State of Kansas to prohibit the application of those fines and fees to cases involving youth under 18 years old. Naturally, programs do not fund themselves, but the BIDS Legislative Committee would like to speak wholeheartedly in support of the proposed legislation under consideration.

Our agency does not represent minors accused of crimes in Kansas, except in some very rare circumstances. But we encounter the aftermath of the juvenile justice system daily. Many of our clients come to us with prior adjudications for juvenile offenses. They have experienced the justice system in Kansas and formed their first impressions of its processes and intentions through interactions with our Juvenile Courts. And we support this legislation because it encourages hope and trust: hope that individual rehabilitation is achievable, and trust that our State's intended goal for people involved in the system truly is rehabilitation.

First impressions are lasting impressions. The same is true of the justice system: a person's early interactions with the justice system will color how they perceive the process for the rest of their lives. Even amongst our younger clients, and especially amongst clients with prior juvenile justice interactions, there is a current of thought that no matter the outcome of their case, the end goal of the State is to send them to prison. Removing juvenile fines and fees will go a long way towards encouraging people at a young age to be hopeful in their rehabilitation. It will remove a significant barrier to the perception that probation is achievable so that should they encounter the justice system as adults, their first reaction will not be one of fear and anger, not one of sorrow and self-loathing, but one of hope and faith that, even though the adult system is different and the challenges will be greater, the State is not going to impose an unbearable burden.

This is the hope and trust that even such a minor change can cultivate in our fellow Kansans who have the ill fortune to eventually require adult criminal defense.

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Removing a difficult barrier to success in a person's first encounter with the administration of justice will show to anyone entering a juvenile courtroom in this state that the State of Kansas believes in their ability to successfully reform, and that even though the burdens imposed for rehabilitation may change in the adult system, the faith that rehabilitation is not just the goal, but is also an attainable goal will continue on as a part of that indelible first impression from one's youth.

For the above reasons, we wholeheartedly support this bill, and would encourage you to pass the bill as proposed. Thank you for your time.

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