

HB 2329 TESTIMONY
CAPTAIN TRAVIS RAKESTRAW
WICHITA POLICE DEPARTMENT
2/14/23

Good afternoon and thank you all for this opportunity.

I currently supervise the drug enforcement units of the Wichita Police Department. The units consist of uniformed officers and undercover detectives that investigate drug complaints across the city. We see, first hand, the fear and concern from those who live near a drug house and the crime brought into these neighborhoods because the suspects are selling drugs. From 2018 to 2022, Wichita saw 13 homicides which occurred during a drug transaction. This is just an example of the impromptu violence that can occur during drug transactions. Assaults, intimidation, robberies and shootings in relation to drug sales occur much more often and lead to the fear in our neighborhoods. Law abiding neighbors are often times afraid to speak up or to leave their homes due to this activity.

From 2020 to 2022, my drug enforcement unit executed 98 drug search warrants where there were indications of drug sales and a firearm was found. These operations are some of the most dangerous performed by law enforcement. It has become extremely commonplace for drug sales and guns to be connected which poses an increased risk to my officers and justified concern from citizens with a drug house nearby.

HB 2329 will enhance penalties from 6 months to 36 months for possession of a firearm during a drug felony and from 18 months to 60 months if the gun was discharged. This will not include those in simple possession of drugs and focus instead on the drug dealer. This bill will also clean up some language in paragraph (g) (1) on page 4 to use the word "possessed" and remove the word "carried".

We are hopeful this bill will hold the drug dealers in Kansas more accountable for their actions.

Thank you and I will stand for questions.