



# City of Lawrence

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Representative Awerkamp, Chair, House Committee on Welfare Reform

28 February, 2023

Chairman Awerkamp,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the City of Lawrence in opposition to HB2430 entitled "Safe Cities Act". This act places certain requirements and restrictions on cities related to how those political subdivisions approach public camping and sleeping and restricting cities' eligibility to timely receive state funding designated for addressing homelessness.

Addressing the needs of those who are unhoused is one of the City's priorities, as reflected in our attached legislative priorities. The City works to develop strong and welcoming neighborhoods with access to safe and affordable housing for all, in tandem with maintaining the safety and security of our community, including through enforcing City ordinances. Lawrence has listened to residents and worked with experts to develop appropriate rules and ordinances that address camping and the specific challenges that Lawrence faces. Why would the state want to intervene, as HB 2430 would allow the Attorney General to do, to make a city enforce laws that the city has carefully calibrated?

We believe that the proposed legislation could have a negative effect on the efforts of cities to address homelessness, especially for those cities with a higher per-capita rate of homelessness than the state average – that is, the cities that could use the most assistance. The necessity under this legislation for the department allocating state funding to "determine that the political subdivision is compliant with this section" would slow down vital programs and could chill funding from other non-state sources. There is also ambiguity in the language of subsection 1(g), which could be interpreted as preempting cities from using local government-owned lands to provide "long-term shelters". This would be a most unhelpful curtailment of local authorities' freedom of action when developing strategies to provide solutions to homelessness.



Furthermore, this could create an unintended consequence of cities choosing to permit more camping by local ordinance so that there would not be any need to discourage enforcement of anti-camping provisions.

We appreciate legislative time devoted by the committee to issues generated by homelessness. However, this City, for the reasons stated above, cannot see the proposed legislation as making a positive contribution to addressing the complex issue of homelessness. The City of Lawrence respectfully requests the Committee to consider the points made, and not to recommend HB2430 favorably for passage.

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Craig S. Owens  
City Manager



# 2023 City of Lawrence Legislative Priorities

**Mission:** We create a community where all enjoy life and feel at home.

**Vision:** The City of Lawrence – supporting an unmistakably vibrant community with innovative, equitable, transparent, and responsible local government.

To realize our Vision for Lawrence, we endeavor to achieve important strategic outcomes. The City's strategic plan outcomes represent what our City is in the business to do and what we plan to accomplish with our community. The outcomes are organized under the following headings: Unmistakable Identity; Strong, Welcoming Neighborhoods; Safe and Secure; Prosperity and Economic Security; and Connected City. For more information, please visit the City's website at [lawrenceks.org](http://lawrenceks.org).

The Lawrence City Commission supports legislation, programs, and funding mechanisms, at the state and federal level that further the City's strategic plan and align with League of Kansas Municipalities 2023 Statement of Municipal Policy. Specifically we support the following priorities:

**1** We support legislation that helps low income and marginalized populations, such as Medicaid expansion and an increase in minimum wage.

**2** We advocate for state and federal programs and state and federal funding to help local communities address housing shortages across all segments of the community, including low and moderate income housing and those who are unhoused.

**3** The city relies on a stable and high-quality workforce to deliver vital services. The city supports efforts to improve the competitiveness of public employment and benefits to attract and retain professional public servants and to support their physical and mental health. One example is: The City asks the Legislature to reduce the vesting period from 15 years to five years for public safety employees who participate in the Kansas Police and Fireman's (KP&F) Retirement System Plan so municipalities can better attract qualified people for critical public safety positions.

**4** Programs and support to develop greater environmental resilience and sustainability and the development of advanced/renewable energy.

**5** Support policies and funding for economic development and growth. In particular tools and funding for extension of infrastructure for land development for workforce housing and industrial development; childcare.

**6** Increased funding and statewide capacity for mental and behavioral health and treatment of addiction.