

Rija Nazir (*REE-juh Nuh-ZEER*)
Resident of Wichita, Kansas
Opponent Testimony of HB2430

March 2, 2023

Chair Averkamp and members of the Committee,

I want to express my gratitude for allowing me to provide testimony for you today. I reside in Wichita, and I am strongly opposed to and truly disappointed by HB2430.

The contents of this bill directly contradict each other. Prohibiting the offering of diversion or assistance programs to the affected individual not only creates a never-ending cycle of incarceration and punishment, but visibly shows us that this legislature does not care about putting an end to homelessness in our state. This shows constituents that this legislature does not care to understand how the causes of homelessness in our state continue to plague our streets and communities. If you genuinely wished to take folks off the streets and keep them off, you would offer sustainable solutions that would not punish Kansans for situations they could not have possibly controlled.

If you do not wish to rid of this bill for the additional hardships it will cause to homeless Kansans, do it for your constituents who are watching closely to see how you protect our most vulnerable. This type of legislation is heavily dependent on respectability, and conceptualizes how this legislature prioritizes its own people. If homeless Kansans are not given the compassion they deserve, who is next? I do not wish to take up your busy day explaining the need to be gracious toward Kansans- you already understand this and took an oath to protect this idea.

If this bill is to pass, please know that it will not quietly become a part of our state's laws. To avoid this, this body should address the leading causes of homelessness including, but not limited to, housing, job security, and discrimination. Our municipalities see our homeless populations everyday. We see how they are set back by our laws and obstacles every day. What better way to minimize homelessness in our state than providing direct solutions from local government? Is this not the future we wish to see for our great state?

In closing, I strongly ask you to take the time to ask yourself who will actually benefit from this bill. Ask yourself who in your constituency will benefit from this bill. If you truly believe that vulnerable Kansans will be able to create a sustainable life from homelessness, there needs to be a serious reevaluation of how we can address this crisis. You would ask your constituents for their opinions, would you ask the affected population in this bill about theirs?

I strongly urge you all to oppose HB2430 and *end* homelessness, not capitalize off it.