

OPPONENT TESTIMONY HB 2430

Good afternoon, esteemed committee members. My name is Charles Carney. For the past 20 years my wife Donna and I have been welcoming unhoused people into our home to be part of our community. That community is sometimes called the St. Lawrence Catholic Worker House of Hospitality and it is located near downtown Kansas City, KS. Today I am also speaking on behalf of the Kansas Poor People's campaign.

House bill 2430 will not only halt progress in ending homelessness, but it will unnecessarily burden the state of Kansas with heavy costs in the long run.

What does work? Housing First and Wraparound services. That is going to be my mantra to you today!

Look, somehow the general public has gotten the notion that persons experiencing homelessness are slackers and they are not doing the best they can with what they got. But the general public has not met Fred, who suffers from severe insomnia, trauma and anxiety, as a result of his dad frequently waking him from a dead sleep and beating him as a child. They haven't met Buford, who struggles with severe auditory hallucinations as a result of contracting early onset schizophrenia in his late teens. Many in the general public think that homeless people are dangerous --- not true, they are less likely to commit violent crimes than domiciled people ... or that "they're all a bunch of drunks and addicts wrong again, only 1 in 4 unhoused people suffer from alcoholism or drug addiction.

Members look me in the eye on this one because I've worked with a whole lot of people in my lifetime who have been homeless. I'd like to let you in on a secret. Every homeless person is ALREADY doing the best they can with what they have, in spite of the triple killers of poverty, trauma caused heightened cortisol levels, and mental health struggles.

So again, what works in ending homelessness? Housing first and Wraparound services. Let me leave you with a short success story.

As a legal representative who specializes in helping unhoused people procure the Kansas Medicaid and SSI benefits. In 2022, our pilot project at Crosslines Community Outreach, I am proud to say got full approvals for 10 out of the 10 clients we assisted. And what did all 10 of these claimants have in common ... wait for it ... they were all involved with a housing first/wraparound services approach! Granted, a small sample size, but you don't have to trust me and you don't even have to trust our Pilot Project.

But you do have to trust the science, trust the experts, trust the overwhelming multiple studies. Hey, since its inception in 2010, the V.A.'s housing first, wraparound services approach has cut the veteran's homeless population in half!

The bible doesn't say, "Lock up and try to erase the stranger," it says, "welcome the stranger with open arms." The bible doesn't say, when I was homeless you gave me the added trauma of a jail cell and a mandatory treatment program," it says "when I was homeless you gave me rest and comfort."

Thank you friends and neighbors for your service to our beloved State. I close by imploring you to:

VOTE FOR JUSTICE, VOTE FOR EQUITY, VOTE FOR COMPASSION. VOTE NO ON 2430!!

Thank you,

Charles Carney
Carney Disability Representation Services
103 North 13th Street
Kansas City, KS 661024
913-603-2483