

Testimony of Louise Lynch

House Welfare Reform Committee
Testimony in Opposition of HB 2430
March 2, 2023

Dear members of the House Committee on Welfare Reform:

My name is Louise Lynch, and I live with my husband and daughter in Kansas City, KS. **I oppose House Bill 2430 as it would harm my community as well as myself and my family, while offering no solutions to the housing crisis our state finds itself in.**

I moved to Kansas in 1998 from Chicago with my daughter to seek more affordable housing and better schools. I was looking for a fresh start and a better life. For the last few years things have been very difficult. My family and I continue to face the effects of long COVID, which has created many barriers, but we continue to do all we can and work hard to keep a roof over our heads.

We had been living in a hotel since December after being forced to move out of a place infested with rodents and where our sewage backed up constantly. After looking for some time, we finally found a place to live. We toured the property, paid our deposit and first month's rent and moved in. Shortly after, we were notified that the property had been rented to us illegally. We were scammed out of \$1,600 and once again do not know where we are going to live and be able to afford.

Too many of us are one crisis away from becoming homeless, especially if you have medical conditions. I've also felt looked down on as a person of color. We have gone to shelters and social service agencies, and they have only been able to provide a certain amount of resources. It is not enough.

To be homeless is hard enough, yet House Bill 2430 criminalizes Kansans' efforts to survive. Where are we supposed to go?

Not only does House Bill 2430 hurt people experiencing homelessness, it holds state funding to address the issue hostage, creating a harmful and ineffective cycle. Bills like HB 2430 make me feel like a 2nd class citizen—Bills like these communicate that when it comes to struggling families in Kansas, they want us out of sight and out of mind. It is dehumanizing.

In the richest country in the world, we know we—and Kansans like—us deserve better. There are ways that the Kansas Legislature can address homelessness in our communities, but House Bill 2430 is not it.

Kansans experiencing homelessness are your neighbors, families, friends, and workers. We contribute to our communities and hope that they too will have our backs when times are difficult.

I urge you to not criminalize homelessness. **Don't look down on us for trying to survive.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony,

Louise Lynch
Kansas City, KS