

KS-505 CoC Board Members

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City of Overland Park
City of Shawnee
Johnson County Department of
Corrections
Health Partnership Clinic
JoCo IHN
Johnson County Planning,
Housing, & Community
Development
Johnson County Housing
Authority
Johnson County Mental Health
Kansas Department of Children
and Families
Lived Experience Advisory Board
Metro Lutheran Ministry
Mid America Regional Council
NCircle
Olathe Housing Authority
reStart Inc
The Salvation Army
Shawnee Mission School District
United Community Services of
Johnson County

In-Person and Written Testimony in Opposition of House Bill 2430 KS-505 Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness Board

Date: February 28, 2023

Chair Awerkamp and Members of the Committee on Welfare Reform:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in opposition of House Bill 2430**. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development requires all communities to have a local Continuum of Care (CoC) that coordinates the local homelessness response system, monitors trends to identify and respond to gaps in services, leads the annual CoC grant process that funds rent assistance and supportive services, and conducts an annual Point in Time Count to count the number of people experiencing homelessness on one night. The Johnson County CoC (KS-505) is made up of approximately 75 agencies, school districts, faith communities, and state, county and city level departments working together to address poverty and homelessness in the County.

House Bill 2430 – the proposed “Safe Cities Act” mandates state-wide criminalization of homelessness and compels local enforcement by restricting access to critical funds intended to support those experiencing homelessness. House Bill 2430 targets and penalizes those in our community who are among the most vulnerable Kansans and, by putting further conditions on funding that supports services for Kansans experiencing homelessness, weakens the very supports available to address and prevent homelessness in our communities.

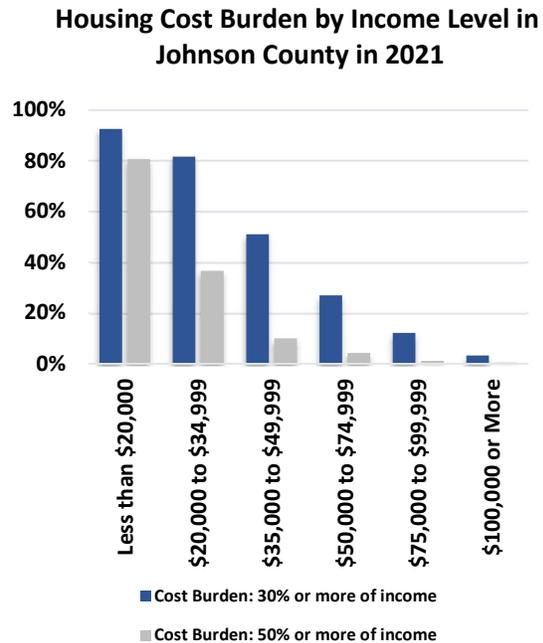
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development allocates federal funding to the state of Kansas for the specific purpose of addressing homelessness through grants like Emergency Solutions Grants and Community Development Block Grants. These grants, which pass through state, and in some cases, localities, provide essential resources for a broad range of services, including emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and homelessness prevention. The loss of such funding, as threatened by HB 2430, would devastate efforts to prevent and address homelessness, and would likely increase the number of unhoused individuals and families in Johnson County.

What Does State Funding Designated for Homelessness Services Support?

- **Homelessness Prevention** – Keeps someone in their housing through stabilization or relocation services, including short and/or medium-term rental assistance
- **Rapid Rehousing** – Intervenes when someone has already lost housing through relocation and stabilization services, including short and/or medium-term rental assistance
- **Emergency Shelter** – case management, childcare, education services, employment assistance and job training, outpatient health services, legal services, life skills training, mental health services, substance abuse treatment services, and transportation, renovation of a building to serve as an emergency shelter, shelter operations
- **Street Outreach** – basic needs and case management to assist homeless households in finding shelter, emergency medical and mental health care, and housing assistance to regain housing

There are many factors that can result in an individual or family becoming unhoused. Participants in the 2022 Homelessness Point in Time Count shared that chronic health conditions, physical disabilities, and mental health conditions were factors that had made it difficult for them to remain housed, and nearly 30% of Johnson County’s unhoused population became unhoused while fleeing domestic violence.

The growing disparity between housing costs and income is another factor contributing to homelessness. Johnson County, like most parts of the country, is experiencing historically high housing costs. Those at lower income levels are most impacted by the high cost of housing. As the chart indicates, **80% of households** with annual incomes under \$35,000 pay **30% or more of their income on housing**. When housing costs consume so much of a household’s income, even one unexpected expense could result in a family becoming unhoused. More than half of those who are unhoused in Johnson County reported that they are employed.



While Johnson County saw a **35% increase** in its unhoused population between 2021 and 2022, options for those seeking shelter continue to be inadequate. **HB 2430 offers no solutions for short term shelter or a path for housing stability**, but instead erects additional barriers for our community members experiencing homelessness, and the agencies partnering to house them.

2021 Short-Term Shelter Beds and Units in Johnson County

- 10 units for families
- 4 units for women and families
- 15 units for adults and families fleeing domestic violence
- 24 beds for justice-involved adults
- 30 beds for adults during cold weather only
- 0 year-round beds for adults

The agencies of KS-505 CoC work in close collaboration with Johnson County and its municipalities to provide much needed resources and supports for our unhoused community members. **HB 2430 undermines local efforts** to design and coordinate housing solutions that work best in our County and communities. **The Board of the KS-505 Continuum of Care on Homelessness opposes HB 2430.**

Sources: 2021 & 2022 KS-505 Point in Time Counts; U.S. Census American Community Survey 2021 1- year estimates