



Testimony of Judge Glock  
Senior Fellow  
Cicero Institute

Before the Kansas House Committee on Welfare Reform

In Support of House Bill 2430

March 2, 2023

Chairman Averkamp and Members of the Kansas House Committee on Welfare Reform:

Good afternoon! My name is Judge Glock and I'm representing Cicero Institute. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 2430.

This bill is a modest and necessary reform that ensures that cities and public places enforce widely adopted and accepted laws against public disorder and public camping, while encouraging people who are living on the street to get the help they need.

The first part of this bill merely prevents local governments from refusing to enforce their own laws. Despite claims to the contrary, this would not require any government to arrest anyone or to change their own policies. The bill merely prevents local governments from taking active steps to forbid enforcement, which, to the best of my knowledge, no city or local government in Kansas is currently doing. It is thus a prophylactic measure to prevent cities from going down the dangerous path that we have seen in places such as Los Angeles, California, or Austin, Texas, where the active encouragement of street camping led to increased death among the homeless themselves. Nobody wants to replicate the problems that emerged in those places, and this bill ensures that that does not happen in the future.

The bill also forbids sleeping or camping without authorization on public land. This is an important tool that state and local officers need to encourage people to move off of the streets and into safer situations. The goal here is not to "criminalize" homelessness, as it provides a backup and alternative to existing local laws that ensure that public space is available to everyone. The bill allows existing local laws on public spaces to stand if they are providing an alternative enforcement mechanism. The bill merely ensures that some public places in the state, either on local or state-owned land, that may have not have explicit rules around camping or sleeping have these as potential tools.

It is important to note that this bill also allows and in fact encourages cities to use diversion rather than criminal sanctions to enforce the law. The first section of the bill provides for diversion as an alternative to citation or arrest, and the second provides a citation that is in effect a warning to anybody sleeping or camping under the state law. In most areas which have decided to enforce laws, such diversions or alternatives are, as they should be, the preferred route. In the year after the city of Austin, Texas began to enforce its laws against camping, scores of people camping were moved to shelters and housing, but there was only one reported arrest. In Colorado Springs, after the city began enforcing a camping ordinance in 2010, the local homeless group reported about 160 went back to their families, 35 went into rehabilitation programs for drugs and alcohol, 80 went into subsidized housing and about 150 got jobs. There were no reported arrests.

This bill is a modest although necessary reform to ensure that cities and the state have the tools they need to ensure public order and get people otherwise in a crisis situation the help they need. Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony at this hearing in support of HB 2430.