



Neutral Testimony from the Coalition to End Homelessness in Wichita/Sedgwick County
Regarding House Bill 2723

Greetings, Members of the Welfare Reform Committee:

I am a board member and representative of the Coalition to End Homelessness in Wichita/Sedgwick County. Our Coalition, comprised of over 500 individuals and 19 organizations, shares a single vision: *to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring for all our neighbors in Sedgwick County.*

Ending homelessness requires a comprehensive approach. While we understand that the Coalition would be ineligible to apply for the proposed \$40 million for emergency shelter infrastructure funding, this funding would most certainly reduce and end homelessness across Kansas. Meanwhile, we also believe it's crucial to support the entire statewide housing and homelessness ecosystem.

Here are the strategies that must be employed:

1. **More housing options across income brackets to keep housing affordable and accessible.** Affordable, accessible housing is the foundation for a healthy community and the most effective tool for ending and preventing homelessness.
2. **Essential services are a must.** Our unhoused neighbors require pathways to obtain state IDs, job training, mental and physical healthcare, and ongoing support to find and maintain housing. This cannot occur while they're nomadic and barely surviving on the street.
3. **Collaboration across organizations is imperative.** We at the Coalition, along with Sedgwick County, the City of Wichita, and the Robert J. Dole VA, successfully demonstrated the power of collaboration through a joint effort that *reduced veteran homelessness 50% in just one year's time* between January 2023 and January 2024.

Specific to the bill, here are the essential issues that must be addressed:

- a. Sec. 2(a) – Rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing funding must be expanded
- b. Sec. 2(b)(3) – Ensure data collection occurs within the project's geographic HMIS, not outside the data collection system.
- c. Sec. 2(b)(6) - Remove the provision “enforce local camping and vagrancy ordinances” or amend to read “enforce local camping and vagrancy ordinances to the extent adequate shelter is available.” These ordinances don't work, waste taxes, and violate local control.

My professional rationale and unique insights that support the above measures:

1. They're proven to be effective in other markets
2. They deliver positive, measurable ROI for the community
3. I was once homeless and fighting for my life on the streets of Wichita

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of this bill today that enjoys enormous opportunity to do the right thing on behalf of our fellow man.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Miracle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kent Miracle
Coalition to End Homelessness Board Member