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Testimony type: Written Only
Position: Neutral

From: Rob Santel, Director of Programs, Cross-Lines Community Outreach
To: Kansas Senate Ways and Means Committee
Re: Kansas Senate Bill 542

Chair Billinger and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony regarding SB 542. My name is Rob Santel, Director of Programs at Cross-Lines Community Outreach in Wyandotte County. Through our intensive street outreach program in Wyandotte County, our team goes out alongside those from the community behavioral health center and the Kansas City Kansas Police Department providing housing-focused supportive services. In Wyandotte County there are zero emergency shelter options for single adults or families. The most common barrier to housing we see is a lack of safe, quality, and affordable housing options (costing no more than 30% of a household's gross monthly income). *We are working locally to shift our focus from managing the problem of homelessness to ending homelessness.* **Funding for shelter infrastructure in SB 542 would be critical for our community to end homelessness.**

I have a few concerns with SB 542 in the current form.

- Local communities know their needs best. They should be allowed to set their own priorities for what types of emergency shelter and housing infrastructure are needed for them to address homelessness.
- Sec. 2(b)(6) has the potential to lead to unnecessary criminalization of persons experiencing homelessness. Creating and enforcing camping bans may temporarily remove unsheltered persons from public spaces, but it does not address the systemic issues that contribute to their homelessness, nor does it provide the services and supports that lead to long term housing solutions.
- The inclusion of a severability clause would allow the emergency housing response to continue if parts of SB 542 are found to be unlawful.

Cross-Lines is committed to ending homelessness in the State of Kansas.

Respectfully Submitted,

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