

# KANSAS LEGAL SERVICES

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**February 10, 2025**

## **Written Only Proponent Testimony House Judiciary Committee**

**Casey Johnson, Director of Advocacy and Litigation  
Kansas Legal Services, Inc.  
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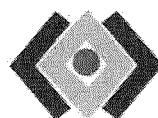
Chair Humphries, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Osman, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 2357. My name is Casey Johnson, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Litigation for Kansas Legal Services (KLS), where we provide legal assistance to low-income Kansans facing housing instability and eviction. Kansas Legal Services, Inc. is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. We are legal aid in Kansas, providing equal access to justice for the most vulnerable Kansans.

Evictions are a huge problem in Kansas, both for those who are evicted, and for the communities in which those people live. In Sedgwick County alone, there were approximately 5,561 eviction cases filed in 2024. HB 2357 provides for the sealing and expungement of eviction records under specific circumstances, mandates mediation in certain eviction proceedings, and establishes consumer protections against the misuse of eviction records. These provisions offer significant benefits to many of our clients, who often struggle with the long-term consequences of eviction filings.

### **1. Prevents Long-Term Barriers to Housing Stability**

For many tenants, even an eviction filing—regardless of the outcome—can create lasting obstacles to securing housing. Landlords and tenant screening agencies frequently rely on eviction records without considering the context or resolution of the case. HB 2357 ensures that cases dismissed, resolved through mediation, or decided in the tenant's favor remain sealed, preventing an unjust penalty for tenants who were never evicted. Additionally, the bill allows for expungement of certain eviction judgments after two years if the judgment is satisfied, giving tenants a path to move forward.



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## **2. Encourages Fair Tenant Screening Practices**

By prohibiting the collection or dissemination of sealed eviction records, this bill ensures that tenants are not unfairly penalized by automated tenant screening systems or property managers relying on outdated or misleading eviction data. Importantly, it aligns with consumer protection principles by treating improper dissemination of sealed eviction records as an unconscionable act under the Kansas Consumer Protection Act.

## **3. Promotes Mediation as a Tool for Conflict Resolution**

HB 2357 requires mediation in eviction cases unless a court determines it would not materially aid the parties. Mediation provides an opportunity for landlords and tenants to negotiate resolutions, including payment plans or lease modifications, that help avoid displacement. In our experience, mediation often results in mutually beneficial agreements that keep tenants housed while ensuring landlords receive payments.

## **4. Reduces the Negative Impact of Evictions on Public Resources**

Evictions contribute to increased demand for emergency shelter services, rental assistance, and other social programs. By sealing and expunging certain eviction records and promoting mediation, this bill can help reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and reliance on public assistance, benefiting both affected individuals and the broader community.

## **Conclusion**

HB 2357 provides a balanced approach that protects tenants from the long-term harm of eviction records while still allowing landlords to pursue legitimate claims. By ensuring fair tenant screening, promoting mediation, and providing a pathway for record expungement, this bill aligns with efforts to create a more just and equitable housing system in Kansas.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

**Casey Johnson**  
**Director of Advocacy and Litigation**  
**Kansas Legal Services**



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