

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am here in support of House Bill 2329, particularly the provisions that restore **judicial discretion** and create **appropriate placements for juvenile offenders**.

I come before you as someone who has **spent a significant portion of my life incarcerated**. I know firsthand what happens when the justice system waits too long to intervene, and I also know what happens when people are placed in the wrong environment at the wrong time.

One of the most important things this bill does is **restore discretion to judges**. When I was younger, consequences were inconsistent and often disconnected from the behavior. Sometimes there were no consequences at all, and other times the response was excessive and untimely. Neither approach works. Accountability must be **swift, proportional, and meaningful**, especially for juveniles. HB 2329 allows courts to respond appropriately to chronic offending and firearm-related behavior before patterns become permanent.

This bill also recognizes something that people with lived experience understand very well: **placement matters**.

Today, too many juvenile offenders are placed into foster care settings. That is not fair to foster children, and it is not effective for offenders. Foster children are there because they have been abused or neglected. They need stability and protection. Juvenile offenders, on the other hand, often need structure, supervision, programming, and clear boundaries.

When those two populations are mixed, **everyone loses**. Foster kids are put at risk, foster families burn out, and offending youth are placed in environments that cannot meet their needs. I can tell you from experience that when young people with criminal behavior are placed in settings without structure or accountability, the behavior escalates.

HB 2329 creates appropriate residential placements—not prisons, but not foster homes either. These settings provide the structure that many juveniles need **before they become adult offenders**. Proper programming, consistent rules, and consequences can redirect a life early, instead of waiting until that young person ends up in an adult facility like I did.

This bill does not promote incarceration for its own sake. It promotes **intervention at the right time**, in the right setting, with the right level of accountability. That is what actually reduces recidivism.

I support juvenile corrections programming because I have seen what happens when it is done right—and what happens when it is avoided out of fear of consequences. Avoiding intervention

does not help kids. It helps create adults who are harder to reach and more expensive to incarcerate.

HB 2329 gives judges and the system tools to act before it is too late, while protecting foster children and preserving public safety.

For those reasons, and based on my own lived experience, I urge you to support House Bill 2329.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Cornelius Gordon

Wichita, Kansas

316-869-4326

awethentic1hunnit@icloud.com