



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2329

To: The Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Desmond E. Bryant White

Date: January 22nd, 2026

Subject: Defending SB 367, Fiscal Responsibility, and Kansas Families

Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Senate Bill 367 marked a historic shift in how Kansas approaches youth justice. It recognized what decades of research and lived experience have shown us—that youth are safer, and communities are stronger, when we invest in rehabilitation and community-based alternatives rather than incarceration.

Where progress has stalled, it is not because SB 367 failed, but because the system has not yet fully invested in the alternatives the law envisioned. Rolling back reforms will not fix that gap. What will fix it is intentional development, sustainable funding, and accountability for programs that keep youth connected to their families, schools, and communities.

I want to ground this in lived experience. I regularly visit youth in the Juvenile Detention Facility. When I ask them what they need, the answers are consistent: guidance, opportunities, mentorship, education, and access to resources. They are not asking for more time locked in a cell. They are asking for support and a chance to do better.

Data supports what these young people are telling us. Research shows that even short periods of detention increase the likelihood of future justice involvement. Youth who are detained are more likely to fall behind in school, experience trauma, and return to the system compared to similarly situated youth who receive community-based services. Extended detention does not improve public safety, it increases harm and instability.

Proposals to double cumulative detention time from 45 to 90 days move Kansas in a more expensive and less effective direction. Longer detention increases disruption to education and family stability, two factors directly linked to higher recidivism and increased future public spending.

From a budget perspective, the choice is clear. Investing in evidence-based alternatives costs less up front, reduces repeat involvement, and lowers long-term fiscal liability. Expanding detention does the opposite.



And If our goal is public safety, accountability, and better outcomes for youth, the solution is clear: invest in well-funded, evidence-based alternatives to detention, expand access to mentorship and education, and ensure resources reach the communities where youth live.

I urge this body to protect the progress made under SB 367 and focus our efforts on building the alternatives our youth are asking for and deserve.

Thank you.