



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2329

To: The Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Khavayi Tsimonjela

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 testify.

This policy takes away a judge's ability to see the full picture and replaces it with a one-size-fits-all punishment. Judges are trained to look at context—intent, risk, and what a young person actually needs to change their path. Mandatory detention ignores all of that and assumes incarceration is the only answer, even when it doesn't make communities safer.

Possession is not the same as harm. Under this proposal, a young person could face incarceration-level consequences without ever using a firearm, threatening anyone, or hurting someone. That response is not proportional, not developmentally appropriate, and not supported by evidence.

I've seen the real-life consequences of policies like this. A close friend of mine was only 16 years old when he was caught carrying a firearm. He didn't hurt anyone. It was a moment of bad timing in a really hard chapter of his life—fear, pressure, and a lack of support. Instead of help or guidance, he was met with extreme punishment. He was sentenced to five years to life. A child. That decision didn't ask why he was carrying or what he needed to be safe. It only asked how harsh the punishment could be.

We also have to be honest about why young people carry firearms in the first place. Many are driven by fear, unsafe neighborhoods, peer pressure, trauma, unmet mental health needs, and constant exposure to violence. Detention doesn't fix those problems. In many cases, it makes them worse by adding more trauma and instability to already vulnerable lives.

Research consistently shows that detaining youth increases the likelihood that they will become more deeply involved in the justice system later on—especially when they could have been safely supported in the community. These policies escalate punishment instead of investing in prevention, accountability, and real intervention.



Kansas already knows that better options exist. Community-based programs work. They hold young people accountable while keeping them connected to their families, their education, and supportive services—things that actually reduce violence and improve public safety.

If the goal is truly to keep communities safe and reduce gun violence, then the focus should be on early intervention, credible mentorship, trauma-informed care, mental health services, and well-funded community alternatives—not mandatory incarceration.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose HB 2329, preserve judicial discretion, and invest in solutions that prevent harm before it happens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.