



**Unified Government of
Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas**

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TESTIMONY

House Bill 2808

**Deasiray Bush, Transportation Department Director
On behalf of the
Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas**

**House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
March 6, 2024**

Good morning Chairman Carpenter and Members of the Committee:

My name is Deasiray Bush and I am the Director of the Transportation Department for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas. I ask for your support for House Bill 2808. The Unified Government Transportation (UGT) offers multimodal transit services such as fixed routes, microtransit services, paratransit, and home-delivered meals for the Meals on Wheels (MOW) Area Agency on Aging program. We operate under the RideKC regional brand as we collaborate and contract with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) for additional services and coordinate with other regional transit providers to make the transit experience user-friendly for everyone.

The Unified Government Transportation Department has implemented a Ridership Code of Conduct to address growing safety concerns. The policy aims to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the Unified Government Transit passengers and drivers, protect equipment and facilities used to provide public transit services and assure civility and desirability. The Unified Government Transportation Ridership Code of Conduct applies to all passengers, whether riding, exiting, entering the bus, or waiting for the bus at a designated transit stop. Violators of the policy will receive up to one year of suspension of

services; however, this is not enough as the violator can utilize other means of transportation, including transit services in other jurisdictions.

For the workers and operations of public transportation, House Bill 2808 is essential. The aforementioned Code of Conduct is not enough to ensure safety of our workers. There has been a recent rise in abuse and harassment from riders to transit workers. These transport operators strongly support police presence because it gives them a sense of security and reassurance. While substituting unarmed security guards for police officers may help mitigate this issue, more serious measures, such as those featured in HB 2808, may be required to fully ensure those who violate the law are held responsible for their conduct.

The daily assaults that bus operators endure include verbal attacks or getting spat on. Many of our operators do not report these “smaller” incidents, which may make it difficult to provide precise data, but the more severe and hazardous forms of assault, such as being threatened with a weapon, being sprayed with mace, or getting punched/hit, are incidents that are always reported. The severity and frequency of these crimes are detrimental to the UG public transportation system. Our workers and passengers should feel safe and protected when operating and utilizing publicly funded services.

I ask for your support in passage of House Bill 2808. The UG hopes to hold unlawful passengers responsible for their crimes, which would improve protection for all other passenger and transit operators who depend on our services.

-Deasiray Bush

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.