



Ryan Baty
Chairman

Commissioner – Fourth District
Board of County Commissioners
Sedgwick County, Kansas

House Welfare Reform - HB 2723

March 4, 2024

Dear Chairman Awerkamp, Vice Chair Howell, and Ranking Minority Member Meyer:

I am writing on behalf of the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners in support of HB 2723, which would assist local governments in strengthening the homeless shelter infrastructure.

Homelessness is a growing crisis across the Sunflower State and one that is not limited only to urban areas. Sedgwick County and other communities are being overwhelmed by the negative impacts of a growing homeless population, including stunted economic growth, high utilization of public services by homeless Kansans, and increased costs for local hospitals. The most recent estimate indicates that 2,500 Kansans are homeless in the Wichita-area alone. HB 2723 would provide necessary funding to local governments to create the necessary infrastructure to allow them to connect homeless Kansans with crucial services to end the cycle of homelessness.

HB 2723 requires local governments to use any funds received for the building or improvement of shelters for the provision of wraparound services for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, while also ensuring that local governments address homeless encampments in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Wraparound services are a crucial part of a comprehensive plan to address homelessness as they equip individuals with the tools necessary to successfully transition out of homelessness for good. Additionally, HB 2723 ensures that local governments truly have a stake in the outcomes for homelessness programs receiving these funds by requiring a dollar-for-dollar local match for state funding for shelter infrastructure, while also utilizing claw-back provisions if these requirements are not met.

In closing, HB 2723 is more than just a responsible piece of legislation. It is an opportunity for the State of Kansas to establish guidelines and ensure that local governments have the necessary resources to address not only the plight of homeless Kansans, but also the far-reaching negative effects of homelessness on our communities and taxpayers.

Thank you for considering our testimony in this matter.

Sincerely,

Ryan Baty, Chairman

Board of County Commissioners of Sedgwick County