



**Testimony to House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice  
Supporting HB 2496  
February 11, 2020  
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) urges the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice to favorably pass HB 2496 to reduce the barriers for criminal justice involved individuals to gain identification. The KC Chamber, representing nearly 2,000 businesses (40% of which in Kansas), and its Board of Directors have identified workforce development and increasing the number of employed criminal justice involved individuals as top priorities. The greater Kansas City region currently has over 73,000 open jobs and the KC Chamber believes citizens returning from our correctional institutions are a good resource to fill some of these positions. HB 2496 will enable justice-involved individuals and returning citizens to gain an identification card which is a prerequisite to applying for jobs.

The KC Chamber supports HB 2496 as it removes one more barrier to entering the workforce that returning citizens may face upon reentering society. Oftentimes when an individual is released from incarceration, gaining state-issued identification is very difficult. Consequently, these individuals have a difficult time applying for jobs, opening bank accounts, applying for housing and other necessary tasks one must accomplish to reintegrate into society and to comply with the terms of his or her probation or parole. The KC Chamber's Workforce Opportunities for Returning Citizens (WORC) Initiative has recruited seven member employers that will begin hiring our returning citizens in a pilot workforce development program. In our discovery and research phase before implementing this program, we consistently heard from returning citizens and businesses that the lack of state-issued identification is a significant hindrance from gaining meaningful employment.

The KC Chamber believes that by removing this barrier for returning citizens and justice-involved individuals, Kansas can get more people back into the workforce while making our communities stronger and safer. The KC Chamber also believes that meaningful employment is a critical tool to reduce recidivism and reoffending and stands behind efforts to reduce the cycle of crime and poverty that unfortunately entraps many in our communities. The KC Chamber and its Board of Directors encourage this committee to pass HB 2496 with a favorable recommendation.

**John Jenks**  
Director, Public Policy  
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce  
816.374.5461; [jjenks@kcchamber.com](mailto:jjenks@kcchamber.com)