



Responsible Policy. Real Prosperity.

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Kansas Center for Economic Growth
Testimony in support to SB 14

Chairwoman McGinn and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Center for Economic Growth is a project of Kansas Action for Children, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. KCEG conducts research and analysis to promote balanced state policies that help every Kansan prosper. On behalf of Kansas families and youth, we support the restoration of \$6 million to the Evidence Based Juvenile Programs Account.

In 2016, Kansas took a strong step forward toward improving its youth justice system. Through SB 367, a reinvestment fund was established to fund evidence- and community-based alternatives to youth incarceration, financed by the savings created through the reforms. The important step of creating a fund that would serve this population has been effective. We have seen a reduction in youth incarceration and increased investment in community-based alternatives, including two rounds of grant funds provided by the state to judicial districts that have served to provide additional resources needed to reduce incarceration through community-based efforts. These evidence- and community-based alternatives cost less and are a more successful way to deal with youth involved in the justice system.

However, during the end of the 2018 legislative session, \$6 million was taken from the Evidence Based Programs Account to be used by the Department of Health and Environment - Division of Health Care Finance. The repurposing of these funds does not honor the original intent of the creation of the Evidence Based Programs Account. Kansas should not move backward by misappropriating funds intended specifically for funding programs known to be effective in reducing recidivism.

SB 367 was a significant step forward to decrease youth incarceration, while creating funding streams for alternatives to incarceration that decrease recidivism and keep youth in their communities. However, SB 367 depends on the reinvestment of these funds into programs that directly serve Kansas youth at risk of involvement in the corrections system. We respectfully request that the Committee adopt SB 14 to return the funds to the Evidence Based Programs Account to continue the wise use of taxpayer funds, increase the chances for successfully supporting youth involved in the justice system, and to keep Kansans safer in the long term.