



March 24, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce and our 1,500 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 2401; AN ACT concerning the department of corrections; authorizing the secretary of corrections to enter agreements for public-private partnerships for projects for new or renovated buildings at correctional institutions for education, skills-building and spiritual needs programs; establishing a nonprofit corporation to receive gifts, donations, grants and other moneys and engage in fundraising projects for funding such projects; amending K.S.A. 75-3739 and repealing the existing section.

The Career Campus concept is a collaborative effort among the Kansas Chamber, the Greater Wichita Chamber of Commerce, the KC Chamber, private employers and businesses, educators, non-profits and the Departments of Commerce and Corrections to establish an educational campus inside Lansing Correctional Facility to boost educational capacity, teach hard and soft skills to make returning citizens employable with market value credentials, and to infuse support from private industry to train, educate and eventually employ these individuals. The goal of this coalition is to not only find success at Lansing but to replicate this model at other facilities in the state. This type of public-private partnership would be a cutting-edge concept that the State of Kansas can lead the nation in and provide an example of responsible and effective corrections and rehabilitation.

The Wichita Chamber stands in strong support of this effort as we believe this type of approach is critical in aiding those citizens who have served their time and are faced with the welcome but difficult task of reentering society as productive members of our Kansas communities. Successful implementation of this program would assist job creators in filling positions at Kansas businesses, something that pre-pandemic was challenging our state's ability to compete on the national level with other states. It is our belief we will very soon return to the days of deficient labor supply, threatening the level of success in the state's economic recovery. Finally, this program would also save the state money within the Department of Corrections, benefiting Kansas taxpayers.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request that the Committee report H.B. 2401 favorable for passage.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins