

Testimony on SB 367 to
The Senate Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
By Ray Roberts
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As a member of the Kansas Juvenile Justice Workgroup, I am testifying as a proponent on SB367. In my former capacity as the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Corrections, I have been involved in a number of workgroups and committees over the last several years. I found the process and framework established by this workgroup to be one of the more successful, organized, and data-driven that I have been involved with during my tenure. The data analysis of Kansas youth and system practices gave us unprecedented ability to make much needed recommendations to our juvenile justice system in Kansas.

While SB367 encompasses many improvements to the juvenile code, I am speaking to three of the main themes today.

Strengthen and Streamline Services

This bill will require the use of validated and uniform risk and needs assessment for all cases post-adjudication. It will require both court services and department of corrections to use the same tool and establish uniform cut-off scores. Further, it requires that the results of such a tool be used to inform supervision level, referrals to programs and services and case planning.

In addition, it will streamline supervision of youth by prohibiting simultaneous supervision by Court Services and Community Corrections; and terminating juvenile offender supervision (the court's jurisdiction over the juvenile case) when a youth is sentenced on an adult crime.

The bill will rectify some of the inefficient uses of systems' scarce resources. We have had instances where youth are incarcerated in adult prison for new adult convictions for months and communities do not terminate their juvenile supervision case. This creates a scenario where the state is paying for the period of incarceration and also paying for youth on the juvenile caseload. In such cases, that same offender is released; they will be supervised by both juvenile probation and adult parole.

We've been told by multiple national partners that our trifurcated system is one of, if not the most, complex in the nation.

Enhance Oversight

This reform bill establishes a body of professionals charged with monitoring progress in designing, reviewing and publically reporting performance measures and outcomes related to each policy area. It is important to monitor fidelity of programs and training reforms, and continue a dialogue about whether the legislation, in whatever form it is passed, is implemented as intended and with the best possible outcomes.

Increased Data Collection and Sharing

There are many entities involved in youth services and this bill requires enhanced coordination and sharing of information of data both between agencies/branches of government, but also in aiding oversight and accountability of those agencies charged with serving youth and families.