

Testimony on Senate Bill 367

To

Senate Corrections and Juvenile Justice

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The Southwest Kansas Regional Juvenile Detention Center and Finney County appreciate this opportunity to provide informational testimony on Senate Bill 367 which would establish adequate funding to local communities for graduated sanctions programs and services. I have worked over 20 years in the field of corrections as a Social Worker for the State of Kansas in the Juvenile Correctional Facilities and then as a Director of many of those facilities and now as the Director of the only Juvenile Detention Center in western Kansas.

The SWJDC is a twenty eight (28) bed facility, funded by seventeen counties in southwest Kansas, including Finney County. Due to the northwest Kansas region closing their detention center we have also been serving youth from their area. Seventeen counties in southwest Kansas fund the majority of the budget based upon a funding formula, and the Northwest pays for youth on a day-to-day basis. We are licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment which is now under the umbrella of the Department of Children and Family Services.

We agree Juvenile Detention Facilities are not places for low risk youth to be housed nor for Child In Need of Care youth and we support options other than the detention facilities for those youth. We do not support the removal of the Juvenile Detention Facility Funds (JDFF) as described in K.S.A 79-4803 and the monies reallocated for the Alternatives to Detention due to the fact the detention centers will still need to be in operation and we expect Juvenile Detention Centers to be safe and secure buildings that are not falling down or crumbling due to lack of funds to maintain the buildings.

The financial responsibilities to house youth who are in the custody of the State of Kansas should not and cannot be shifted and/or passed down to local units of government. Currently the State of Kansas Department of Corrections only pays a portion of the daily rate it takes to operate when a youth is in the facility and in state custody, with the counties having to fund the remainder. These prices meet our daily minimum level of funding needed to operate.

The SWJDC was built in 1994 therefore it is over 20 years old. Over the last four years the JDFF dollars have provided for an industrial washer and dryer due to the high amounts of laundry completed daily, new tiles in bathroom showers, new tiles in living pods and activity rooms, replacing worn carpeting in classrooms and living pods, hot water heaters, new mattresses for youth, industrial dishwasher, etc. All usage of JDFF dollars are approved by the Kansas

Department of Corrections-Juvenile Services for the betterment of the facilities in order for the facilities would be safe for youth to reside. The repercussions to the facilities, if these funds were to be allocated to community programs, would be deterioration of buildings and eventually having to charge counties more funds for housing high risk offenders. Unfortunately some high risk offenders, in state custody, destroy items in the facilities. However, the state does not reimburse the counties for the repairs. We are concerned due to the counties already struggling with funding resources as we speak, that the ramifications of this bill could ultimately be far reaching and could place youth and staff at risk of harm.

Over my many years of conducting programming, I have witnessed thousands of lives changing due to evidence based programs and employing staff who care about the youth we serve. Therefore, we support full funding of the core graduated sanctions and prevention programs. We support some of the out of home placement funds being shifted to fund increased supervision needs and the creation and expansion of locally based community treatment and service options in hopes of the youth being able to be maintained in their community. However, out of home placements will be necessary for some high risk youth who simply will not or cannot be maintained in the community due to their level of violence or inability to reform after treatment options have been exhausted.

Juvenile Detention Facilities serve a great purpose for the communities and do more than lock up youth. We provide and value education, social skills building groups, job readiness, anger control, substance abuse programs, and we address both physical and mental health issues.

Rural areas, such as those in western Kansas have challenges where services are lacking, slow to be delivered due to a backlog of youth waiting for treatment, and the challenges to families with low socioeconomic issues who have to travel great distances for treatment programs.

We respectfully ask that adequate time for transition and sufficient resources be allocated to allow for the communities to absorb youth who are currently in State of Kansas custody and placed in group homes, foster care, and Youth Residential Center II's.

We hope that you fully realize in western Kansas the SWJDC is the only detention center and counties travel sometimes two and three hours to place a youth. Therefore, we do **not** serve many youth who are considered low level youth unless the courts have exhausted every avenue available.

Maintaining the Juvenile Detention Facility Funding is imperative for the safety and security of the youth we serve.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I will be happy to address any questions you may have.

