

Legislative Testimony

In **Support** of House Bill 2653
Senate Committee on Judiciary
February 26, 2026

In-Person Testimony

Chair Warren and Members of the Committee,

My name is Logan DeMond, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas. The ACLU of Kansas is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with more than 35,000 supporters statewide that works to protect and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of all Kansans. On behalf of the ACLU of Kansas, I stand in support of House Bill 2653, which enshrines effective reentry practices already implemented by the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) into law. This bill ensures that future KDOC leadership continues the critical practice of equipping residents with essential identification and employment-related documentation before release, improving their ability to reintegrate into their communities.

The Challenges of Reentry

In 2020, nearly 550,000 people were released from state and federal prisons across the U.S. after serving their sentences (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022). In Kansas, 95% of incarcerated individuals will eventually return to their communities, with 33% serving less than a year, 47% serving less than two years, and 66% serving less than five years. However, returning home is fraught with challenges—securing housing, finding employment, and accessing healthcare all require valid identification (Fanning, 2024). Without it, necessities such as signing a lease, opening a bank account, or applying for a job can become nearly impossible. Recognizing this reality, the Federal Bureau of Prisons is required to assist federally incarcerated individuals in obtaining essential identification documents such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, and driver’s licenses prior to release. **Six** states have followed suit by passing laws or implementing administrative policies to facilitate this process (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022).

KDOC Reentry Process

HB 2653 ensures that incarcerated individuals in Kansas are equipped with the critical identification and employment-related documents necessary for reentry. Under this bill, KDOC must determine whether an individual has the required identification at least nine months before their release and assist them in obtaining any missing documents. These documents are essential for securing employment, accessing housing, and rebuilding a stable life upon release. Ensuring

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returning citizens leave with them removes unnecessary barriers that hinder successful reintegration.

The Kansas Department of Corrections already follows strong reentry policies to improve reintegration success. As Secretary of Corrections Jeff Zmuda testified in support of a similar bill in 2024:

“Providing opportunities for residents to reenter society as fully engaged citizens is essential to public safety and is key to reducing recidivism rates. Having the proper documentation upon return to the community helps returning citizens obtain a job and, in turn, support their success” (Zmuda, 2024).

By codifying these practices, HB 2653 guarantees that future KDOC leadership will continue providing these essential documents, removing uncertainty and ensuring uniformity across all facilities.

Conclusion

Returning home after completing a sentence is already challenging; it should not be made harder by failing to provide essential documentation needed to function in society. Ensuring that individuals leave incarceration with valid identification and employment records removes unnecessary barriers to reentry, reduces recidivism, and increases public safety. This bill aligns Kansas with best practices in reentry policy as seen at the federal level and in other states. Codifying these requirements will directly contribute to reducing recidivism and improving public safety. For these reasons, on behalf of the ACLU of Kansas, I encourage you to support HB 2653 and strengthen Kansas’ commitment to evidence-based reentry policies.

Logan DeMond
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References

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