



TESTIMONY OF  
**VIGNESH GANAPATHY**  
POLICY DIRECTOR, AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF KANSAS  
KANSAS LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEE  
DECEMBER 20, 2017

*- WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY -*

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas is a non-partisan, non-political membership organization dedicated to preserving and strengthening the constitutional liberties afforded to every resident of Kansas. We work to preserve and strengthen our constitutional rights and freedoms through policy advocacy, litigation, and education. We proudly serve over 30,000 supporters in Kansas and represent more than 1.6 million supporters nationwide.

**The ACLU of Kansas opposes privately expanding the Lansing Correctional Facility, because:**

- **Private prisons generally serve their own interests over the interests of Kansas.** State control of private prisons tends to be weaker than public prisons because private wardens also report to out-of-state corporate executives. This removes much needed oversight and weakens executive authority. Furthermore, private prisons cherry pick their prisoners, leaving more expensive inmates for the state. State-run prisons are usually responsible for housing death row inmates, the infirm and maximum security prisoners, all of whom are more expensive to incarcerate.<sup>i</sup>
- **High staff turnover rates at private prisons threaten public safety.** A report supported by the Federal Bureau of Prisons showed that corrections officers at private prisons have higher turnover rates and are paid less than the corrections staff at state run facilities.<sup>ii</sup> Kansas already faces challenges with correctional staff turnover, with El Dorado Correctional Facility having a turnover rate of 46% just this year. The more turnover with prison staff, the more dangerous prisons may become for employees and inmates, contributing to riots, assaults and escapes.<sup>iii</sup>
- **Kansas already incarcerates too many people, and expanding Lansing Correctional Facility would worsen our state's challenges.** Last year, we spent \$229 million to house 9,800 inmates, many of them non-violent drug offenders or individuals with a mental illness. Meanwhile, our prisons have been unable to pay staff adequately, leading many to resign and leaving critical posts vacant. Prisons are just one part of our criminal justice system, and we can better address our correctional needs through greater use of diversion and reforming our harsh sentencing laws.

**Expanding the private correctional facility at Lansing would lead to expensive over-incarceration with little oversight. Therefore, we oppose this unnecessary privatization plan.**

<sup>i</sup> Private Corrections Institute, Inc., Quick Facts About Prison Privatization (2009), [http://www.privateci.org/private\\_pics/Private%20prison%20fact%20sheet%202009.pdf](http://www.privateci.org/private_pics/Private%20prison%20fact%20sheet%202009.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Scott D. Camp and Gerald G. Gaes, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Growth and Quality of U.S. Private Prisons: Evidence from a National Survey 3, 9 (2001).

<sup>iii</sup> Private Corrections Institute, Inc., Quick Facts about Prison Privatization (2009).