

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ACLU of Kansas Launches Website to Unveil the Power of Prosecutors to Transform the Criminal Justice System in Kansas**

**OVERLAND PARK, KS ---** Today, the ACLU of Kansas launched *You Make the Case*, an initiative to educate Kansans on the most powerful person in the criminal justice system: the local prosecutor

Prosecutors serve as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, but their role is often misunderstood by their constituents. *You Make the Case* outlines the largely untapped power prosecutors have to reduce mass incarceration, allows users to look up their own county prosecutor's criminal justice policies, and equips Kansans with the necessary tools and means to advocate for smart criminal justice policies that make their community safer and stronger.

Acting as the representative of public safety, prosecutors decide—without having to consult anyone else—who is charged with a crime, what that crime is, and what the consequences will be. Their decisions have a direct impact on our state's crumbling prison facilities, taxpayer funding, and—most importantly—the stability of Kansas communities and families.

Despite their significant influence, prosecutors are also some of the most inaccessible elected officials. Many individuals do not know who their local prosecutor is, let alone the power they wield. *You Make the Case* serves to inform, educate, and create awareness for citizens to hold their prosecutor accountable to their community's needs and to advocate for criminal justice policies that save taxpayer dollars and strengthen Kansas communities.

Among these policies that carry the potential to fix our broken system is the utilization of alternatives to prison, such as mental or behavioral healthcare intervention, and a greater use of diversion.

Diversion is one of the prosecutor's best avenues to reduce overcrowding and limit recidivism, yet it is severely underutilized in Kansas. Statewide, prosecutors use diversion at a rate of 5%, which is half the national average.

Despite this low rate, an overwhelming majority of Kansans – 94% – support their prosecutor using diversion more frequently, but many are unsure of how to express their views. *You Make*

*the Case* allows them to directly email their prosecutor to express their priorities and expectations for their prosecutor's agenda.

“Our prosecutors hold the key to transforming our state's broken criminal justice system, but achieving meaningful reform will require the engagement of their constituents,” said Micah Kubic, executive director of the ACLU of Kansas. “We hope *You Make the Case* serves as a valuable tool in building a fairer and more just system for all.”