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Oral Testimony in Support of HB 2653  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Chair Warren, Ranking Member Corson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of Kansas Appleseed in support of HB 2653. This bill would require the Kansas Department of Corrections to assist inmates in obtaining identification and employment-related documentation prior to release. The specific identification documents include copies of birth certificates, social security cards, and driver's licenses. Inmates with educational certifications, vocational training records, and records of work while incarcerated would also be assisted with acquiring proof of these credentials and drafting a resume.<sup>1</sup>

Kansas Appleseed is a strong advocate for adult justice reforms that prioritize rehabilitation and support smooth transitions into society for formerly incarcerated individuals. The provisions of HB 2653 align with these goals by strengthening pathways to stability post-imprisonment through ID acquisition and resume building.

The chief predictor of recidivism is the inability to find employment, followed by the lack of housing. The Prison Policy Institute estimates that the unemployment rate among formerly incarcerated people is 27%, nearly seven times higher than the national unemployment rate as of January 2026.<sup>2</sup> A 2006 study also found that 25% of justice-involved adults in Kansas are experiencing homelessness.<sup>3</sup> And as of 2020, KDOC shows that the recidivism rate within three years of release is 25.16%.<sup>4</sup>

A penal record is already a significant impediment to securing housing and employment, but being without the necessary identification to even apply for a job or a lease worsens this precarious situation. A study by the Government Accountability Office found that among all federal and state prison inmates who were incarcerated sometime from 2018 to 2021, 37% had

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. 2653. 2025 Biennium. 2026 Regular Session (Kansas 2026).  
[https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025\\_26/measures/hb2653/](https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/hb2653/)

<sup>2</sup> *Reentry and recidivism*. Prison Policy Initiative. (n.d.).  
[https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/reentry\\_and\\_recidivism/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/reentry_and_recidivism/); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026). *Civilian unemployment rate*. Graphics for Economic News Releases.  
<https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-unemployment-rate.htm>

<sup>3</sup> ACLU of Kansas. (2016). Fact Sheet: Improved Reentry Services Strengthen Communities and Reduce Spending in Prisons. Overland Park, KS.

<sup>4</sup> Zmuda, J. (2025). Annual Report Fiscal Year 2024. Topeka, KS; Kansas Department of Corrections.

no form of identification. Disaggregated by ID, only 40% of inmates had a social security card, 20% had a birth certificate, and 25% had a state-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license).<sup>5</sup>

HB 2653 would be a positive step forward in helping inmates overcome these barriers to reentry.

Current KDOC policy, Section 14-60A, allows the department to provide released individuals with a certificate of identification that can be used as an identifying document when applying for a state ID or driver's license.<sup>6</sup> HB 2653 builds on this policy by erasing the barriers to securing identification that inmates often face.

Life after detention is rife with hardship. Former inmates commonly lack two requisites for obtaining a social security card, a copy of a birth certificate, and a driver's license: Money and transportation.<sup>7</sup> The cost to purchase a copy of one's birth certificate is at least \$20, and the cost of a new driver's license, assuming that an inmate's expired or was lost while incarcerated, is at least \$41.<sup>8</sup> Although this total price tag may feel measly to us, \$61 is a lot for a financially scarce individual just released from prison.

It is free to get a new social security card, if one can make it to a SSA office. However, there are private, predatory companies that offer assistance to acquire one for a cost, and their service can pose security risks due to the transmission of private information.<sup>9</sup>

HB 2653 would lift these burdens off the shoulders of Kansas inmates by shifting the responsibility and cost of acquiring identification onto KDOC and the offices with which it would partner, such as the SSA, the DMV, and the Office of Vital Statistics. Seventeen states, of all partisan compositions, presently administer policies similar to the provisions of HB 2653 with great success. For example, 75% of outgoing inmates in Colorado are released with a state-issued ID in hand, and 88% of Floridian inmates exit prisons with an ID.<sup>10</sup>

Let's join the early cohort of states that are investing in the future of their formerly incarcerated populations. HB 2653 passed 124-0 in the Kansas House of Representatives. The body recognized that the state is best positioned to navigate the costly, time-consuming bureaucracy

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, December 7). *Bureau of Prisons: Opportunities Exist to Better Assist Incarcerated People with Obtaining ID Documents Prior to Release*. GAO. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105302#:~:text=BOP%20data%20show%20that%20about,people%20with%20Social%20Security%20cards>; U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, December). BUREAU OF PRISONS Opportunities Exist to Better Assist Incarcerated People with Obtaining ID Documents Prior to Release. Washington, D.C.

<sup>6</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. (2024, January 4). *Providing Identification for Those Released From Incarceration*. NCSL. <https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/providing-identification-for-those-released-from-incarceration>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, December 7). *Bureau of Prisons: Opportunities Exist to Better Assist Incarcerated People with Obtaining ID Documents Prior to Release*. GAO. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105302#:~:text=BOP%20data%20show%20that%20about,people%20with%20Social%20Security%20cards>

<sup>8</sup> Kansas Department of Revenue. (2023, May). Kansas Credential Fee Chart. Topeka, KS.; Kansas Department of Health and Environment. (n.d.). *Birth Certificate*. KDHE. <https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/1186/Birth-Certificate>

<sup>9</sup> Social Security Administration. (n.d.). *Replace Social Security Card*. Social Security. <https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022, December). BUREAU OF PRISONS Opportunities Exist to Better Assist Incarcerated People with Obtaining ID Documents Prior to Release. Washington, D.C.

and furnish outgoing inmates with the identifications and records of credentials needed to secure employment, housing, medical care, a bank account, and other services that make rehabilitation possible.<sup>11</sup> I hope this committee, and eventually the entire Kansas Senate, come to the same conclusion.

Thank you for your time,

Brenna Visocsky

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<sup>11</sup> Wise, C. (2020, December 31). *Leaving prison without a government ID can block access to housing, jobs and help*. PBS.