



(Continued from front)

screening out of the process. Kansans who have been to prison are less likely to have graduated high school or college, and have limited opportunities as a result. Ex-offenders are often unable to obtain a driver's license, and so lack reliable transportation even to those jobs they may be able to find.

A 2006 study found that nearly a quarter of those released from prison in Kansas were homeless, with nowhere to go. Even prisoners who claimed to have living arrangements made before their release found reentry more difficult than they expected and were 7 times more likely to end up in a homeless shelter. The same study found that more than a third of Kansas offenders had been diagnosed with alcohol or substance abuse addiction. Without adequate resources for treatment out of prison, many of these individuals relapsed and returned to prison.

### **“Banning the box” is a common-sense solution that will reduce recidivism.**

Kansas should “ban the box” on applications for state employment. “Banning the box” means no longer forcing job seekers to disclose their criminal history at the start of the job application process. When ex-offenders check the “yes” box on an application's question about their criminal history, they essentially remove themselves from the applicant pool, limiting their ability to find a job to support themselves and their families.

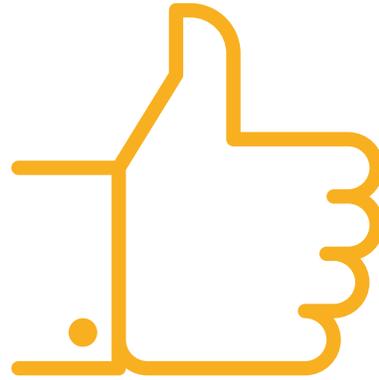
That's why 24 states and hundreds of municipalities—including Topeka, Wichita, and Wyandotte County—have banned the box on applications for most public sector employment opportunities. Federal agencies now delay probing into an applicant's criminal history until later in the hiring process.

Banning the box does not require employers to hire ex-offenders. It simply does not allow employers to screen out applications before an individual's other relevant qualifications are considered, giving individuals a second chance.

Although Kansas should move to immediately ban the box on state employment applications, it should also ban the box for private employers. Nine states have already done so. States that ban the box see reduced rates of recidivism. Communities are strengthened and crime prevented when ex-offenders are able to work, earn income, pay taxes, and bring structure to their lives.

### **Support for reentry services saves taxpayers money and strengthens communities.**

In addition to banning the box, Kansas should take other steps to improve reentry services. Action must be taken both while individuals are incarcerated and after release. Prison staff should help inmates prepare for their release from the first day they arrive. Steps that can be taken include expanding access to educational



## **Improving reentry services in Kansas will**

- ✓ **Significantly reduce crime and recidivism.**
- ✓ **Provide ex-offenders with a real second chance.**
- ✓ **Strengthen communities and reduce long-term costs of the criminal justice system.**

opportunities, job training, life skills courses, and mentoring programs. The proven, evidence-based programs currently operating in Kansas should receive significant increases in funding. Increased funding should be made possible thanks to cost savings generated through other criminal justice reforms that reduce the costs of prison.

Returning citizens should have adequate access to substance abuse treatment and mental health services. Substance abuse and mental health conditions are significant contributors to incarceration. Treating these conditions is a powerful and effective way of reducing recidivism. It is also much cheaper, with treatment costing 77% less than incarceration does—just \$3,600 annually, compared to the \$18,000 annual cost of incarceration. By focusing on prevention and providing evidence-based community services, we can **reduce recidivism in Kansas and save significant amounts of taxpayer money.** ■

**On average, providing substance abuse and mental health treatment costs taxpayers**

**77% less than incarceration.**