



To: Senate Judiciary

From: Nathan Eberline – Associate Legislative Director & Legal Counsel

Date: February 5, 2013

Re: Executive Reorganization Order 42

The Kansas Association of Counties altered its legislative policy statement this year to address the stand-alone status of the Juvenile Justice Authority (JJA). The Kansas Association of Counties received strong support from its members for the JJA to continue as a separate entity to address the unique needs of at-risk children in Kansas. By its own description, JJA notes that youth have a chance at rehabilitation when receiving support within their respective communities. When successful, this reduces the likelihood of recidivism as adults. Counties execute a number of services in conjunction with JJA and would like to continue a relationship that has thrived since JJA became a stand-alone entity.

Some of the elements that counties address and fund include county/district-attorney review of cases and holding youth in juvenile-detention centers. Local also operate Juvenile Corrections Advisory Boards that include interested parties from “Law Enforcement, Prosecution, Judiciary, Education, Corrections, Ethnic Minorities, Social Services and the General Public.”¹ Between funding the services and the efforts of the local boards, there is a responsive local approach to meeting the community’s needs and treating at-risk youth in the hope of avoiding lawlessness in adulthood. JJA has an intervention and prevention approach to programming that is unique. Kansas has approached children as distinctly different from adults in the Department of Corrections system. Our members remain concerned that children will lose their unique standing, and our State will collectively be stuck serving the at-risk youth when they become offending adults.

Community corrections is a challenging process, and the distinctly-different characteristics of at-risk children complicate the equation when evaluated against adults in the Department of Corrections. As it stands, Kansas has an agency that focuses on children in an effort to prevent youth from later entering the DOC. KAC’s opposition to the ERO largely stems from the believe that youth must receive continued recognition as a special population—not as adults. Based on this concern, KAC opposes ERO 42. Thank you for your consideration, and please let us know if we can provide any additional information.

¹ “Juvenile Justice Authority, http://www.jja.ks.gov/corrections_advisory_board.html (accessed February 4, 2013)