



Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Mathew Faulk. I am Director of Supportive Housing for the Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, the safety net mental health provider and the local Mental Health Authority for coordinating the delivery of publicly funded, community-based mental health services for Douglas County. The Bert Nash Center has been in Douglas County since 1950 and celebrated our 70th year of service in July. We are a member of the Behavioral Health Coalition of Douglas County and the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice regarding HB 2192, "Authorizing court services officers and community corrections officers to provide a certification of identification to offenders for use to obtain a new driver's license."

For individuals experiencing extreme poverty and living without access to housing, the need to obtain replacement ID and other personal credentials is widespread. Assistance to replace lost, stolen, or out of date personal identification is one of the primary, initial services we provide for impoverished households through the Bert Nash Homeless Outreach Team and Community Supportive Services, many of who are exiting correctional facilities. Without the credentials for personal identification, the individual cannot legally access employment, or apply for benefits or housing subsidies. Obtaining legal identification is therefore a crucial initial step in helping households improve their lives. However, today, navigating the system to get legal identification is full of systemic hurdles and barriers that requires service providers and clients to spend large amounts of energy and time to accomplish the task.

For example, existing policies require that a current identification is needed to obtain identification. Individuals who have lost all their credentials therefore find themselves in a "Catch 22" situation in which to obtain identification they must first have identification.

Over the years we have devised various strategies and partnerships with other agencies around how this might be accomplished, but even in the best scenarios the process is lengthy, cumbersome, and prolongs the time the individual remains in poverty, goes without housing, and remains without employment. It is all too common for our service providers and clients to spend several months or longer attempting to obtain documents needed to obtain legal identification. There are instances in which it has taken more than a year for an individual to obtain legal identification with the aid of a supportive service provider.

The policy change proposed in HB 2192 allowing for court services or community corrections officers to issue an identification certificate to obtain state issued identification would eliminate a significant barrier for individuals. This would allow them to reenter their community more quickly, obtain employment, housing, and healthcare. It would help break the destructive cycle of poverty that prevents these individuals from a more meaningful and productive role in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mathew Faulk". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mathew Faulk

Director of Supportive Housing