



**Senate Committee on Judiciary**

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 415**

**Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs**

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024**

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We also serve as the state's affiliate for the National Retail Federation through the Kansas Retail Council. The Kansas Retail Council (KRC) focuses on retail business issues and gives Kansas retailers a unified voice on legislative and public policy matters.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 415, following up on last year's SB 244 strengthening the Attorney General's prosecutorial authority on retail theft. I first want to start by saying we truly appreciate the Attorney General making organized retail crime a priority of his office. These actors are not one-off shoplifters stealing one or two items. There is a serious concern with the level of organization behind those involved with these schemes.

Organized retail theft has become one of the biggest issues to retailers across the country. Up until recently, prosecutors and retailers have been limited in what could be done to address organized theft. A study in 2022 by the retail industry estimates that organized retail crime results in \$118 Billion in losses per year. Target's CEO stated in November of 2022, that retail theft cost their company more than \$400 million in 2022 alone. Congress finally has passed the INFORM Act, a priority of retailers across the country to help track sales of merchandise on third-party seller websites as products were stolen from stores only to be resold on another website under a third party seller.

Just like last year's SB 244, SB 415 this year provides stronger enforcement capabilities by the Attorney General by establishing a specific crime known as "organized retail crime." In closing, we again applaud Attorney General Kobach for making retail theft a priority in his first term in office and on behalf of the Kansas Retail Council are happy to be supporters of this legislation and other efforts to deter these criminal acts against retailers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I'd be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

