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Sam Brownback, Governor

Testimony on HB 2509
To
House Committee on Vision 2020

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The Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to offer neutral testimony with some concerns regarding HB 2509. HB 2509 would require the executive chief information technology officer to approve all expenditures for information technology. The department supports any advantage that can be gained through leveraged purchasing, taking advantage of volume. However, the addition of another level of bureaucracy which is not accountable for the security of adult and juvenile correctional facilities or public safety in the community raises issues the department would like the Committee to take into consideration.

Information Technology has of course revolutionized the private and public sectors and its applications continue to expand exponentially. Many of the IT applications for the department are similar to that found in the public and private sector, such as use of email and the collection and processing of data. However, IT for the department is also an integral part of the department's security operations and its mission of public safety. Criminal history information which is strictly regulated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, facility cameras for the protection of staff and offenders, sentence computation, identification systems for facility access, visitor records, recording of inmate telephone calls, gang affiliations, electronic medical and mental health records, victim notification and safety plans are just a few of the IT security applications utilized by the department.

If appropriations for the department fully addressed IT and "traditional" security needs such as staffing of facility and parole officers, training, locking systems, and programs to name just a few; and there are no unexpected needs for additional funds for either IT or "traditional" security expenditures, the division of the department's operational budget between the secretary of corrections and the chief informational technology officer would be feasible even if cumbersome. However, the reality facing the department is that it must be able to adapt to ever changing circumstances and emergencies. At times, funds that were originally designated for either IT or "traditional" security expenses must be transferred as priorities, threats and circumstances change. It is respectfully submitted those decisions should be made by the Secretary of Corrections who the Governor has entrusted with the mission of operating the state's correctional system.