

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
XX, XX, 2015**

**CONTACT:**

**Governor Brownback, Kansas Leaders Announce Formation of  
Juvenile Justice Workgroup**

**Topeka** – Gov. Sam Brownback legislative leaders and Chief Justice Lawton Nuss today announced formation of a bipartisan panel that will examine Kansas’ juvenile justice system and recommend comprehensive reforms aimed at improving public safety and outcomes for youth.

The launch of the inter-branch Juvenile Justice Workgroup marks the first critical step of a wide-ranging review of Kansas’s juvenile justice system. Following a model used successfully by many other states, the panel will conduct an intensive, data-driven analysis of the system, evaluating policies and practices to develop proposals for effective reforms.

“Juvenile justice reform is a priority for my administration,” Gov. Brownback said. “I look forward to an honest assessment of what’s working and what could be improved. I want to see recommendations that help Kansas protect public safety and improve outcomes across our juvenile justice system

Formation of the Workgroup comes amid growing concerns about the effectiveness of the Kansas juvenile justice system, for juveniles and taxpayers alike. Some of these concerns have been raised recently by the Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice, which provides legislative oversight for the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Although juvenile commitment rates have declined in Kansas, the drop has not kept pace with national trends. The most recent national statistics show that while the average commitment rate across the country declined 48 percent from 1997 to 2011, Kansas experienced a reduction of 38 percent over the same time period.

“Over the next six months the Workgroup will examine the juvenile justice system from top to bottom,” said Chief Justice Nuss. “It will take a hard look at our system to see if it is working as best as it can, and if it is not up to snuff, the experts on the Workgroup will recommend changes to improve outcomes across the board.”

Made up of representatives from all branches of state government as well as law enforcement, the Workgroup will review key data from across the juvenile system and gather input from those who work on the front lines with youth and their families. In developing proposals for reform, the group’s priorities will be to:

- Promote public safety and hold juvenile offenders accountable
- Control taxpayer costs
- Improve outcomes for youth, families, and communities in Kansas

The Workgroup’s recommendations will be used as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes during the 2016 session of the legislature. A portion of any cost savings from reforms or averted expenditures would be reinvested in strategies and programs shown to reduce recidivism, hold juvenile offenders accountable, and promote public safety.

Joining Brownback and Nuss to establish the Workgroup were Senate President Susan Wagle, Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, Speaker of the House Ray Merrick and House Minority Leader Tom Burroughs. All of the officials expressed optimism that the Workgroup’s review would produce meaningful improvements, leading to better outcomes for youth, their families and Kansas taxpayers.

“The primary goal of this Workgroup is to increase public safety and create a more effective and efficient juvenile justice system,” said Speaker Merrick. “Working together we can do better for our kids, families, and communities by shifting policy and resources toward smarter strategies that cost less. I look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Workgroup later this year.”

“The Workgroup will take a hard look at whether the system is actually achieving the goals that we as a legislative body have set,” said Senate President Wagle. “If we are not living up to our own goals, I urge the Workgroup to help us find ways to improve.”

“I am encouraged that Kansas will be working to develop comprehensive reforms to our juvenile justice system,” said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley. “Now Kansas has an opportunity to take a look at the entire system, rather than select areas, to help troubled juveniles avoid a future of incarceration and instead become productive members of society.”

“Kansas needs a system where juveniles aren’t just locked up, but one in which they have access to high quality rehabilitation services and the opportunity to redeem themselves and get back on the right path,” said House Minority Leader Burroughs.

The Workgroup is co-chaired by Representative John Rubin and Senator Greg Smith, chairs of the House and Senate Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committees. It also includes 15 additional members:

- Representative Gail Finney, District 84
- Senator Pat Pettey, District 6
- Judge Thomas Foster, 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Judge Mary Thrower, 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Judge Delia M. York, 29<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- Mark Gleeson, Office of Judicial Administration
- Stephanie Springer, 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Chief Court Services Officer
- Ray Roberts, Secretary, Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC)
- Terri Williams, Deputy Secretary of Juvenile Services, KDOC
- Randy Bowman, Director of Community Based Services, KDOC
- Melody Pappan, Cowley County Youth Services Administrator
- Jaime Rogers, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department for Children and Families
- Trent Wetta, Kansas Legal Services
- Karen Griffiths, Assistant County Attorney, Norton County
- Ed Klumpp, Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police

The state will receive technical assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts throughout the Workgroup process and the 2016 legislative session.

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