

March 6, 2024

Dear Members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives:

The Oklahoma House will consider two bills tomorrow, March 7, that will bring positive changes to Oklahoma's justice system.

House Bills 3497 and 3499, both authored by Representative Tammy West, represent significant strides toward addressing pertinent issues concerning fines, fees, and housing accessibility for individuals with criminal records.

House Bill 3497 offers a proactive solution by removing the \$40 district attorney fee for individuals under community supervision. Initially intended to aid district attorney operations, this fee has inadvertently burdened those striving to reintegrate into society. By eliminating this fee, we aim to relieve financial strain on individuals under supervision, fostering a fairer and more compassionate justice system.

Oklahoma faces notable hurdles in fine and fee collection, with approximately 70% remaining uncollected, posing challenges to our justice system's efficacy. By trimming unnecessary fines and fees, we empower justice-involved individuals to focus more on rehabilitation and community reintegration, thereby bolstering public safety.

House Bill 3499 tackles the pivotal issue of housing access for individuals with criminal records. The scarcity of affordable housing, compounded by discriminatory practices, creates challenging barriers to successful reintegration. This bill matches state regulations with federal guidelines to ensure equitable housing opportunities for all Oklahomans, regardless of their past interactions with the justice system.

Emphasizing individualized assessments in housing determinations, House Bill 3499 underscores the importance of considering factors such as rehabilitation efforts and community involvement. By discouraging blanket denials based solely on criminal records and advocating for transparency in the screening process, this bill paves the way for everyone to have easier access to housing.

As the Regional Director for Right On Crime, I am happy to advocate for these bills, which align with our steadfast commitment to conservative reforms that strengthen public safety, facilitate rehabilitation, and uphold fairness within the justice system.

Thank you for your attention to these crucial matters.

Marilyn Davidson  
Oklahoma and Regional Director for Right On Crime