



Kansas Statewide
Homeless Coalition

2024 Survey for Kansas Public Leaders and Candidates

Name

Sandy Pickert

Office:

Kansas House of Representatives

Party

Republican

District

88

Home City

Wichita

Ballot City

Wichita & Andover

Policy and Strategy:

Kansas Housing Resource Corporation's 2021 Housing Needs Assessment found that "A shortage of quality, affordable housing is an undeniable barrier to economic growth and development in any community, and particularly in rural communities in Kansas." How likely are you to support increasing funding for affordable housing development?

Very Likely

Comments:

I'm aware of the shortage of affordable housing across the state and support the development of housing which will enhance economic growth in communities. Matching grants or other incentives for housing investors and developers may be options to consider by the legislature.

Inadequate access to mental health and substance use treatment programs contributes to homelessness in Kansas. How likely are you to vote to expand mental health and substance abuse treatment programs?

Very Likely

Comments:

Expanded mental health services are in process, but slowly developing across Kansas. A lack of adequate numbers of mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities and especially a lack of mental health and substance abuse professionals are contributing to the shortage of programs.

How likely are you to be in favor of limiting annual rental increases?

Very Likely

Comments:

With rising inflation and property taxes, rentals rates are increasing at an alarming rate. I favor reasonable limits in rental increases.

Kansas has no statewide plan that comprehensively addresses homelessness. How likely are you to support the implementation of a statewide affordable housing plan to address homelessness?

Neutral

Comments:

I serve on the House Welfare Reform Committee. Hearings and discussions regarding homelessness issues have occurred in this committee over the past two years. I am supportive of increasing affordable housing in communities, but am not in favor of a housing first plan which provides housing for the homeless without other wrap around services to address challenges including mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, lack of adequate employment, chronic physical illness, financial illiteracy, etc. A coordinated Kansas plan would be helpful for exchange of ideas, challenges and successful approaches to homelessness. I don't believe the State of Kansas should be responsible for implementing and funding an affordable housing plan. Each community has similar, but unique homelessness issues. The county and/or community should be the level at which homelessness is addressed by community decision-makers and with community resources.

How likely are you to advocate to allow for more affordable housing developments in urban and suburban areas?

Likely

Comments:

As stated above, I advocate for counties and/or urban and suburban communities to develop affordable housing. They may opt to collaborate with federal and other housing agencies or resources. Currently there are no affordable housing programs funded by the State of Kansas that I'm aware of.

How likely are you to be in favor of establishing a state-funded rental assistance program to stabilize low-income renters and support property owners?

Neutral

Comments:

I believe it is more effective for communities to assist their low-income renters and support property owners. Incentives such as lowered property taxes or tax credits for the property owners are possible options. Local non-profit organizations, churches, etc. are possible groups who could assist stabilization of low-income renters.

How likely are you to support legislation or programs to provide legal assistance to tenants facing eviction?

Likely

Comments:

Often eviction occurs when the renter has a lack of financial resources. I believe it's important to assist renters with funding to make up the shortfall for rent and utilities during times of financial difficulties. Legal assistance is also helpful to prevent eviction. Assistance to individuals and families facing possible eviction is a positive step to prevent homelessness.

How likely are you to support increasing funding for domestic violence shelters and services to prevent homelessness?

Likely

Comments:

Domestic violence sometimes forces abused individuals into homelessness. Assisting those dealing with domestic violence with mental health services, temporary shelter, meeting their physical needs and assisting them to transition to housing and employment will empower them to be self sufficient in a safe environment.

What funding sources will you prioritize or advocate for to support homelessness programs and services? (Check all that apply)

Federal grants and programs (e.g., HUD Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants)

State Government funding initiatives

Local government budgets and funding allocations

Private donations and philanthropic foundations

Corporate partnerships and sponsorships

Community fundraising events and campaigns

Social impact bonds and other innovative financing mechanisms

Public-private partnerships

Tax revenue initiatives (e.g., bonds, levies specifically for housing and homeless services)

Comments:

Each of these funding sources are important to support homelessness programs and services. As stated earlier, I believe each community should maximize their resources first to provide programs and services to solve homelessness locally. Federal and state government grants, programs and funding initiatives may enhance community efforts, but only when a community is providing programs and services at their full capacity and potential.

Housing Solutions

Kansas does not have enough shelter space; nearly two thousand Kansans sleep outside or in their cars in dangerous weather conditions. How important is it to increase funding and capacity for emergency shelters to meet immediate needs?

Very Important

Comments:

Emergency shelters for homeless Kansans is needed during dangerous weather conditions. No homeless person should suffer or die due to extreme Kansas weather conditions. Emergency shelters should be temporary and an entry point for homeless individuals and families to enter programs and services to assist them in finding permanent shelter, earned income and self sufficiency.

How important is it to develop more transitional housing programs to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing?

Important

Comments:

Transitional housing programs are places for receiving appropriate services such as counseling, addictions treatment, physical illness treatment, job training, etc. Accountability for participating in appropriate services offered should be a condition of staying in transitional housing programs.

How important is it to expand permanent supportive housing options with integrated services for long-term stability?

Very Important

Comments:

Many people who experience homelessness require long-term integrated services for long-term stability in order to reach self sufficiency.

How important is it to implement a low barrier approach that prioritizes permanent housing with support services?

Neutral

Comments:

If "low barrier" means allowing entry into permanent housing with support services for anyone who qualifies, I am supportive. If "low barrier" means those who enter permanent housing with support services are allowed to live in housing without being accountable to participate in programs such as counseling, addictions treatment, job training, etc., I am not supportive of this approach.

How important is it to collaborate on the local level to ensure a coordinated response that addresses homelessness?

Very Important

Comments:

Coordinated efforts provide the best approach to address homelessness. Local communities should have "skin in the game" by providing programs and services for homelessness to the best of their ability based on their community resources.

How important is it to use data-driven strategies to allocate resources based on current demand and long-term outcomes?

Very Important

Comments:

It's important to know the data, i.e. how many are affected by homelessness, where they are living, how many are served by community efforts, and how many are from outside the community where they are seeking services in order to develop strategies for immediate programs and services and for future homelessness needs and prevention.

How important is it to create a flexible funding source that allows communities to address local needs?

Important

Comments:

Communities need the flexibility to address their unique homelessness challenges.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

Will you establish regular communication channels with local nonprofits to address homelessness?

Yes

Comments:

I meet regularly with Sedgwick County and the City of Wichita elected officials, leaders of homelessness and housing initiatives and non-profits organizations who serve the homeless. During these meetings, I learn about the current status of homelessness issues and participate in discussion of future possible homelessness initiatives.

Do you plan to participate in a workgroup or advisory council that addresses homelessness that includes representatives from key stakeholders throughout Kansas?

Yes

Comments:

Yes, I plan to continue involvement in Sedgwick County/Wichita workgroups and as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee on the state level to address homelessness.

How important is it for state entities to collaborate on homelessness initiatives?

Very Important

Comments:

It's important for state entities to collaborate on homelessness initiatives, especially for awareness of commonly shared homelessness challenges statewide, in order to address needed policies and possible funding of initiatives.

Employment and Education:

How likely are you to be in favor of creating state incentives for businesses that hire individuals experiencing homelessness?

Very Likely

Comments:

Communities with work force gaps need workers to fill job openings and homelessness individuals need jobs. Job training is essential for willing workers to fill the gaps. Businesses willing to work with homeless workers deserve an incentive, similar to businesses willing to work with disabled workers.

Will you support job training and vocational programs tailored to the needs of homeless individuals?

Yes

Comments:

Absolutely!

Do you support the creation of a statewide initiative to simplify the process of obtaining a state ID for homeless and low-income individuals?

Yes

Comments:

Without a state ID, it is difficult to obtain services such as Medicaid or apply for a job. We absolutely need to simplify the process to obtain a state ID for homeless and low-income individuals.

Health and Well-being:

Do you advocate for Medicaid expansion to increase healthcare coverage for low-income individuals?

No

Comments:

Low income individuals are already eligible for Medicaid services and may also qualify for health insurance through the exchange. In 2023 and 2024, Kansas Medicaid expanded services for those who qualify for IDD and elderly waivers by increasing workers' wages who serve these populations, decreasing the waiting lists for eligible Medicaid recipients and increasing provider and hospital reimbursements for serving Medicaid patients. Expanding Medicaid through the federal government would substantially increase the numbers of those who are Medicaid eligible, many who are currently employed, and will increase demands on an already inadequate work force of healthcare providers available for current Medicaid eligible patients.

How critical is Medicaid expansion for increasing healthcare coverage for low-income individuals in your view?

Not Critical

Comments:

Besides medical care, low income individuals in Kansas may also qualify for other programs including food assistance, cash assistance and child care.

Will you support the integration of healthcare services within shelters and housing programs?

Yes

Comments:

Integration of healthcare and other services is essential in shelters and housing programs in order to get to the root cause(s) of homelessness and provide the services needed to treat the cause (mental illness, addictions, domestic violence, etc.) in order for the homeless individual to move forward and become self sustainable to the best of their ability.