



Kansas Statewide
Homeless Coalition

2024 Survey for Kansas Public Leaders and Candidates

Name

Jason Anderson

Office:

Kansas Senate

Party

Democrat

District

35

Home City

Overland Park

Ballot City

Overland Park

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:

Knowing that affordable housing inventory challenges communities throughout Kansas, I would advocate for a state-level incentive program for affordable housing development. Such a program could encourage broader private sector investment, increase our affordable housing supply more rapidly, and provide tax incentives for non-investor first-time home buyers to begin their home ownership journey.

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:

Expanding access to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs is critical to addressing homelessness in Kansas. Many individuals experiencing homelessness struggle with untreated mental health issues and substance use disorders, which impacts their ability to secure stable housing. By investing in these programs, we can provide the necessary support to help these individuals achieve stability and improve their quality of life.

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

Unlikely

Comments:

While limiting rent increases can create short-term benefits for renter protection, it also creates long-term reductions in new housing development. Given that our greatest challenge is simply having enough available affordable housing inventory, I would prefer to focus on expanding our housing options before discussing any regulatory action on landlord behaviors.

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?

Likely

Comments:

Implementing a statewide affordable housing plan to address homelessness in Kansas is essential. Such a plan would not only provide stable housing options for those in need but also coordinate resources and support services more effectively.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

I believe it's possible to expand the range of housing types in urban and suburban communities without negatively impacting the character and quality of those neighborhoods. My district has a broad range of housing needs, ranging from multi-unit apartments and townhomes in the north to larger estates and rural developments in the south. People have a range of preferences and priorities for housing, and we need to respect those needs, but we also need to put renewed investment into the affordable end of the housing strategy.

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?

Very Likely

Comments:

The specific funding mechanisms used for any state-funded rental assistance program are important, so I can't say universally that I would support any and all such programs. That said, these programs turn short-term costs into long-term fiscal benefits, such as reduced healthcare costs, increased workforce stability, and reduced homelessness support costs.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

Preventing evictions can save public funds in the long term by reducing the need for emergency shelter services, healthcare, and other social services that support individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Tenants facing eviction often lack the resources to hire legal representation, which puts them at a disadvantage in eviction proceedings.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

Investing in services and shelters for domestic violence survivors reduces chronic homelessness, and significantly reduces the long-term costs for more extensive interventions later. These programs improve overall community health, reduce crime, and are fiscally responsible.

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

Corporate partnerships and sponsorships

Public-private partnerships

Comments:

As a state senate candidate, I believe my personal role in this issue should be more focused on steps we can take at the state level (such as Kansas budget line items or brokering public-private partnerships with healthcare and other aligned industries within the state).

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?

Important

Comments:

The low population density in the rural counties of the state makes universal emergency shelter capacity challenging. Operating shelters requires dedicated and qualified staff, which also makes significant expansion of any shelter program relatively difficult. That said, creative programs such as mobile emergency shelters or regional (rather than local) shelters could go a long way to closing the gap.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Transitional housing programs are much more cost-effective than homeless shelters and other emergency shelter solutions. In addition to reducing recidivism and building self-sufficiency for at-risk populations, transitional housing can provide a stable environment for returning to self-sufficiency.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Permanent supportive housing is a core component of the "Housing First" approach, which prioritizes

providing stable housing as a first step to recovery without preconditions. This approach has been shown to be effective in reducing homelessness and improving outcomes, which ultimately reduces public costs across a range of public services.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Implementing a low barrier approach that prioritizes permanent housing with support services is essential for effectively addressing homelessness. This approach provides immediate stability, integrates comprehensive support services, and promotes long-term well-being. The benefits include reduced public costs, improved health outcomes, and enhanced community stability.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Most services targeting homelessness are actually implemented at the local level. Local governments and community organizations are on the front lines of addressing homelessness, providing essential services such as shelters, food assistance, healthcare, and case management.

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

Very Important

Comments:

As an engineer and data scientist, I've seen and implemented data-driven solutions in a wide range of industries. In each case, data serves as an impartial and insightful tool that helps to identify trends, predict outcomes, and optimize resource allocation. By leveraging data, we can develop more effective, efficient, and sustainable solutions.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Each community faces unique challenges and circumstances that require tailored solutions. A flexible funding source enables local governments and organizations to design and implement programs that directly address their specific needs and priorities. Moreover, it enhances efficiency, accountability, and community engagement.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

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

Yes

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

Yes

Comments:

I would be happy to participate in a workgroup or advisory council focused on affordable housing and reducing homelessness / increasing housing access.

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

Very Important

Comments:

I'm a strong believer in evidence-based strategies; an important component of an evidence-based strategy is sharing data between different states and organizations in a search for trends and best practices.

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:

Employers can sometimes be hesitant to hire new employees who are homeless, either due to preconceived expectations about job performance or the logistical and legal complications of establishing an employee relationship. State incentives can help mitigate these concerns: financial incentives can reduce the economic risk to the employer, and support services can help to ensure the new employee is successful in their new role.

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

Yes

Comments:

Depending on how long a homeless individual has been out of the workforce, there can be many soft and hard skills that need development to be able to integrate effectively into the modern workforce. I am committed to supporting job training and vocational programs tailored to these needs.

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

Health and Well-being:

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

Yes

Comments:

Medicaid expansion in Kansas is a moral and economic good.

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

Very Critical

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

Yes