



Kansas Statewide
Homeless Coalition

2024 Survey for Kansas Public Leaders and Candidates

Name

Nikki McDonald

Office:

Kansas House of Representatives

Party

Democratic

District

49

Home City

Olathe

Ballot City

Olathe

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 have volunteered at the Project 10/20 homeless shelter for the past several years & am keenly aware of these challenges facing our community.

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:

I serve not only in the KS Legislature on the Health & Human Services Committee, as well as the Education K12 Budget Committee. In both of these, I've increased the funding and access for mental health resources.

Additionally, I serve on the Johnson County Mental Health Advisory Board. In this capacity, I have learned so much about the resources we have available, as well as the areas of needed improvement here in Johnson County.

I also realize that many portions of the state are less equipped to help those suffering from mental health challenges, as well as substance abuse. It is important that we work with local agencies to learn from them about their needs, since they have boots on the ground.

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

Neutral

Comments:

This is a nuanced question. There have been times when my husband and I owned rental properties. A variety of factors played into when we raised rent, many of which were beyond our control. I am not opposed to looking into this to see what the impacts would be & to determine what unintended consequences might occur.

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?

Very Likely

Comments:

This is vital. Affordable housing is a chronic issue across the country and Kansas is no exception.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

I believe this will only happen if we have public/private partnerships & take advantage of grants and other available incentives.

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?

Likely

Comments:

If we have the funds available, I think this is an idea worth considering. It would be important to me that we make a plan that is sustainable, though.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

In Johnson County we have a program that mediates between landlords and tenants who are in danger of being evicted. This is an innovative approach that is working & should be expanded.

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

Very Likely

Comments:

I believe this is a huge need.

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

Public-private partnerships

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

Comments:

*I am not familiar with Social Impact Bonds.

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:

For years I have advocated for a permanent year-round transitional housing shelter in Johnson County. We are in the planning stages & are working to acquire the property where it will be located.

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

Very Important

Comments:

I believe in the Housing First model. People need to be in a safe place before they're able to focus on getting their unique challenges addressed through case management. Only when we are safe are we able to think beyond the now.

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

Very Important

Comments:

It is the right thing to do.

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

Very Important

Comments:

The Project 10/20 Emergency Cold Weather Shelter here in Johnson County is a low barrier shelter. I've volunteered there for several years & have seen first hand the procedures established that make this possible, including locking up weapons and medication, allowing people to stay if they are intoxicated, as long as they are not a danger to others, etc.

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

Very Important

Comments:

The local level is where people know best what is needed and what could work.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Data-driven strategies are always important and efficient.

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

Neutral

Comments:

I'd like to have more information on exactly what this might mean. I do think there need to be guidelines and there needs to be a reporting mechanism to prevent abuse.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

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

Yes

Comments:

I already do.

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 am involved in this on a local level here in Johnson County, but would be interested in a broader discussion and approach.

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

Very Important

Comments:

Municipalities should be in communication so that they can help each other & enhance services.

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:

I am a big fan of education & retooling. We have a shortage of workers, so it's an economically advantageous initiative to retrain people to fill available jobs.

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

Yes

Comments:

This is a great idea & one I'd like to explore.

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:

Obtaining a state ID is such a barrier for many. It should not be that hard, but bureaucrats have slowed down the process & added barriers.

Health and Well-being:

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

Yes

Comments:

I was one of 5 Democrats who voted to expand Medicaid in the Health and Human Services. No Republicans voted yes. Infuriating.

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

Very Critical

Comments:

The economics of it alone are indisputable.

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

Yes

Comments:

We need wraparound services and individualized case management that includes healthcare. Thank you for your service to our community and for the opportunity to participate in this survey. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me.