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**PREPARED STATEMENT
BY CLAIRE MCCASKILL,
JACKSON COUNTY PROSECUTOR, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
VICE-PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF DRUG COURT PROFESSIONALS
BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

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It is an honor to appear in front of you today. I am here today as the Jackson county Prosecutor and the Vice-President of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. I would like to clarify one point before I begin. Please don't make the mistake of assuming that I am a lightweight liberal do-gooder woman who doesn't believe in locking people up. I began my legal career as a court room prosecutor and as the elected prosecutor of Jackson County I have enacted policies which have resulted in more mandatory sentences for people who commit crimes with guns and have successfully targeted repeat violent offenders for no plea bargain policies. We aggressively pursue the death penalty and have increased the number of people going to the penitentiary by 20% since I took office in January of 1993. I am not here advocating drug courts as a social worker, but rather as no nonsense prosecutor who embraces this model because it works. It reduces crime and saves money.

The participants in drug courts are non violent offenders, with non violent records who have a drug problem. If the charged defendant successfully graduates from drug court the charges against him are dismissed. Most of the participants would be eligible for traditional probation which is much less rigorous than the drug court regimen. Why do they opt for drug court? Many times it is because they know they need help, sometimes it is because they want to avoid a felony record, and in a few cases they are hoping to avoid incarceration. Drug courts provide intense supervision, judicial monitoring, constant random urinalysis, drug treatment, and, if resources are available, other support systems such as education, job training, job placement, relapse prevention, aftercare, transportation, transitional housing, and prevention

training for family members and children. The most crucial components are the judicial involvement and drug treatment. The drug court chants/defendants appear in front of the judge on a regular basis where the judge is able to immediately castigate or praise, based on the participants behavior in the program over the past few weeks. If the judge believes that the "client" needs a wake-up call after failing to comply with the program in some regard, he can immediately put the participant in jail for a few days to get his attention. On the other hand, if the "client" has had model behavior he will receive a round of applause from everyone in the courtroom, or perhaps a free movie pass for his family. Support systems, supervision, immediate praise or punishment from a big symbol of authority are the bread and butter of drug courts.

It works. Time after time, in jurisdictions across this country, statistics show that recidivism among drug court graduates is lower than for those completing traditional probation or incarceration. Let me give you three brief examples from Kansas City. Mary...college graduate...previous arrest for forging prescriptions...caught again...addicted to

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prescription painkillers lives in the suburbs....good Job....now clean for the first time in a decade...gave birth to healthy drug free baby in July...reunited with her family. Darryll...never knew father...dropped out of school in 9th grade...mother IV drug user...grew up around family using and selling drugs....previously served time in penitentiary for stealing...caught selling small amount of crack to undercover after **drug court** ...clean ... back caring for his children...over past few months has worked his way up at McDonald's...now manager. Joseph, 30,...firefighter since age of nineteen...experiencing personal problems...turned to recreational drug use...caught selling marijuana to undercover... a felony conviction would have not allowed him to return to fire department graduated from **drug court**...now back fighting fires with custody of his 6 year old son. All of these people in my community are now back to being a contributing member of society...as parents and taxpayers.

As a prosecutor who deals with blood and death every day, I urge you to remain committed to the **drug court** model and the other prevention measures in the crime bill. Please. I don't need the work.
 END

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COUNTRY: UNITED STATES (93%);

STATE: MISSOURI, USA (93%);

CITY: KANSAS CITY, MO, USA (93%);

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