

Before the House Committee

On the Judiciary

Testimony in Support of HB 2151

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Mr. Chairman and Committee:

My name is Derrick Baxter, I am currently a corrections officer employed at a state ran correctional facility. I have been a corrections officer at a correctional facility in Kansas for the last two (2) years, prior to that I was employed at another sate agency for six (6) years, with a total of eight (8) years of service as a state of Kansas employee. As a state employee for eight (8) years I have seen numerous interactions that could be classified as bullying, and while employed at my previous state agency I was a victim of bullying by my direct supervisor. I worked under a supervisor who was a great supervisor if she liked you, but could make your life very hard at work if she didn't like you on a personal level. I had a very good relationship with my supervisor for my first two (2) years, but when I expressed my dislike for ideas on certain projects her attitude towards me changed. The dislikes were things like changing protocols on different projects to streamline the work load. I was told that "this is how it's always been done, and this is how it will be done as long as I'm here." By challenging her on how projects were completed my supervisor made my job very difficult and at times was condescending towards me which in turn cased a hostile work place environment for me.

My supervisor increased my work load and micromanaged every project I was working on. I found out from co-workers that she was talking to them about me, and expressing her dislike of me to them. She also shared her dislike of me with other supervisors in the building which blackballed me and made it impossible for the other supervisors to have a fair and unbiased opinion when I interviewed for other positions at that agency. As you can imagine, this was disturbing and frustrating news to hear so I went to my human resources department to inquire what my rights were and what could be done. After meeting with the human resources department, I was informed that her actions did not violate any policies, which was emotionally harmful to me as I knew that I would just have to deal with her actions until I could find another position within the state. As a result I loathed going to work because I didn't want to have any dealings with my supervisor. I began taking longer paths to my work space to avoid walking past her office, I began abusing my sick and leave time to avoid having to go to work, and I rejoiced when her retirement was announced and she began using sick days to avoid losing them.

Since then I have changed jobs, but still see the same sort of bullying taking place at my current work site. I am a very active member of KOSE (Kansas Organization of State Employees) and no longer have issues with bullying directed towards me, but I see bullying towards new employees and/or employees that are not willing to stand up for their workplace rights. This is frustrating to see because people are finding ways to bully co-workers and subordinates without violating human resource policies. As an active KOSE member I do my best to stand up for my co-workers and to inform them of their rights when I see or hear about bullying at work, but there is only so much I can do for

them. My co-workers need to be able to stand up for themselves, but right now they don't know how and/or are too afraid to do so because of fear of retaliation! I see the importance and impact of HB 2151 because this could give state employees the right to stand up and say enough is enough without fear of retaliation. As stated earlier, a lot of the work place bullying that takes place does not directly violate any human resource policy so there is nothing that can be done for the employee; and there needs to be a way for an employee to report bullying at work without fear of retaliation. HB 2151 would give employees a way to report bullying and give the state of Kansas employees the opportunity to go to work without fear "what's going to happen today." HB 2151 has the potential of creating healthier/happier work place environments; the morale of state employees will increase; and the abuse of leave will decrease. State of Kansas employees should not have to wake up and dread going to work because of the bullying that takes place at their work site! Right now there is nothing to prevent bullying at the work site, but HB 2151 will give the state of Kansas employees the security and comfort that they can go to work in a bully free zone and perform their job duties without fear of retaliation because they don't get along with their supervisor.