

**Testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee
Senate Bill 3
Presented by Eric Stafford
Wednesday, February 4, 2015**

Madam Chair and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 3. SB 3 eliminates a statutory disqualification of unemployment insurance benefits for bus drivers who are employed by a private contractor providing transportation services to school districts in the state.

The reason for our opposition is rather simple. The purpose of the unemployment insurance system is to supplement the loss of income when an individual loses their job by no fault of their own. SB 3 expands benefits to individuals who do not meet this standard. Bus drivers operate under a contract with summers off. Assuming they have performed their job satisfactorily, they can return to employment at the start of the next school year. Therefore, no job has been lost. SB 3 would grant unemployment benefits for the short period of time in between school years. The cyclical usage of the system during slow periods for employees is something this committee has attempted to curb through previous legislation.

Second, if SB 3 were to pass, it would create unequal treatment of bus drivers in the UI system. Bus drivers who work for a private contractor would be eligible for benefits under this proposal, but drivers who are employed directly by a school district would not. We have concerns over expanding eligibility of those who qualify for benefits and what the impact would be on the trust fund in future years.

To close, this legislature has made many positive changes over the past few years to strengthen the integrity of the UI system in Kansas by ensuring benefits are available for deserving individuals. SB 3 takes a step backward in providing benefits for those who have not lost employment. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I would be happy to answer any questions.

The Kansas Chamber, with headquarters in Topeka, is the leading statewide pro-business advocacy group moving Kansas towards becoming the best state in America to do business. The Chamber represents small, medium and large employers all across Kansas.

