

Testimony IN OPPOSITION to SB 179
Before the Senate Commerce Committee
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Chairperson Lynn and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Parry. I am a state employee and work at one of our state hospitals. I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to you regarding SB179. I am here as a private citizen and not as a public representative of any state agency.

Employees having the right to bargain for their working conditions is important for many reasons. We are the ones who actually do the work, and can offer valuable feedback on how best to accomplish a job.

An especially valuable tool under our KOSE Memorandum of Agreement is the ability for a union steward to ensure that all parties are having a progressive process regarding discipline. For example, if an employee is improperly disciplined the result can be termination of employment. This has serious consequences for all parties. The employee loses a source of income, along with retirement and other benefits. The employer loses a trained employee resulting in problems with staffing and the additional cost of training another person for replacement. Discipline can often be taken care of in a more beneficial way for both parties. The employee can be put on a plan of improvement that can help the employee function at a higher level.

When a union steward is present, it also ensures that due process is followed, reducing the perception that the employer is "bullying" the employee. This lessens the risk of the employee seeking legal action against the employer and makes for a more harmonious workplace.

In my own experience at labor management meetings (which include management and union representatives) many problems are solved with a simple phone call rather than other procedures that cost time and money. When the workplace has a culture of open communication it creates a safer and more trusting environment for everyone.

The goal of the KOSE Memorandum of Agreement, and of bargaining in general, is not to foster a hostile relationship between labor and management, but to increase communication and problem solving for the benefit of the whole organization. I hope you will consider this point of view and vote against SB179. Thank you again for allowing me to speak to you today; I am happy to answer any questions you may have.