

Debbie Bartuccio

From: dorothyda5@aol.com
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To: Debbie Bartuccio
Subject: Fwd: SB3

To the Honorable Senators and Representatives:

I am writing this testimony as a concerned employee , trainer and a tax payer. I work for First Student, the transportation contractor for the Wichita school system. It concerns me that we, as contractors, are thrown together as school employees. The drivers are very well trained for driving our students including those for special needs, It takes a very special driver to safely transport all the students. I have trained many (about 200). Many are solely trying to exist on their bus driving income. I hate to train a new drivers- only hoping that they will return after trying to survive the summertime with whatever employment they can find until August for the next school year. And very often they will not return because they found a more solid source of income. Very few summer routes are available and are about one third of what general school season has to offer. When I lived in Minnesota, even the construction workers were provided unemployment when there was "the winter slow down" for construction. Kansas is the only state that prohibits employees now to be eligible that are in our same situation. If and when the work is not forthcoming to help retain the work force, I would certainly rather have an experienced driver returning to be behind the wheel transporting our next generation, our future.

We are not school employees. As contractors serving a district, we are not guaranteed salary, or even from week to week the same work / pay. Routes are constantly changing or become deleted. For as the expectations from the public and school district, they are as high as if we are direct employees , but with no benefits provided. Most drivers income is below or at the poverty level. The question that is asked of those filling out the unemployment application - reasonable assurance of returning to the same job. The answer is no. The work load is never exactly the same week to week, nor guaranteed to sustain. Our employer is striving to prevent us from going close or into overtime. If school is not in session for snow days or non student attendance days, we are not paid. If we do charter work - basically anything other than driving to and from school day attendance, we are paid at a lesser rate . (About \$3-\$5 less per hour). Our regulations from DOT are to not be working more than 60 hours a week from ANY job. Also because of the nature of the school day - we work a split shift. Many other employers are not willing to accommodate our available work hours plus the regulation of having 8 hours of rest before we are back on the clock for driving. As a public citizen driving the streets, I certainly hope all drivers of heavy equipment are well rested to do their work.

Our employer pays into the unemployment fund, with many drivers being refused before and since the last law change. I see that the employer pays into the funding supporting the system , but when it is needed, the support is refused. The employer is then not able to draw from the pool of qualified workforce in an efficient manner.

Regards,
Dorothy Dorman