

Public Service Employees Local Union 1290PE AFL-CIO

2600 Merriam Lane Kansas City, Kansas 66106
OFFICE: 913-432-7738 • FAX: 913-432-2026 • www.local1290.net

March 9, 2015

The Honorable Julia Lynn, Chairperson
Senate Commerce Committee
Statehouse, Room 548-S
Topeka, Kansas 66612

RE: Testimony of Jeremy Hendrickson in Opposition to Senate Bill 179

Dear Chairperson Lynn and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jeremy Hendrickson, and I am the Business Manager/Secretary for the Laborers' International Union of North America Local Union 1290PE. I am submitting testimony in writing to urge you not to pass Senate Bill 179.

The Public Employer-Employee Relations Act (PEERA) has been in place for the better part of 40 years and has served as an important vehicle for employees and employers to come together in a formal process to discuss issues of mutual concern. I worked as a public parks department employee for many years and I would not have stayed in the public sector without the ability to work formally with my employer to better the conditions of my work place. In the PEERA process, the employees are directly involved and meet face-to-face with employer representatives. This gives both sides a unique opportunity to address issues before they become a problem, and having the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) available to act as an intermediary helps facilitate these discussions and brings a level of formality to the process.

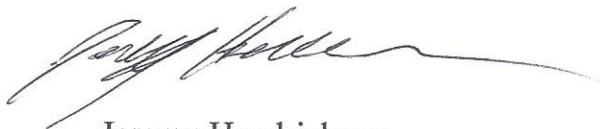
Also, the improvement in working conditions benefits the employer by giving it the ability to recruit and retain employees. Potential employment applicants, regardless of their education or socio-economic background, are becoming increasingly more sophisticated, and with the advent of the internet, they are able to research benefit programs when deciding where to apply. Many employers we work with use the results of PEERA discussions to attract these applicants. When employers can show prospective applicants a written document outlining the benefits and working conditions, they have a distinct advantage over other employers, especially those employers on the other side of the state line. Taking away this process will undoubtedly affect Kansas employers' abilities to compete.

1of2

Finally, PEERA has had formal remedial processes in place for many years. Employers are under no obligation to reach an agreement with employee organizations, but having mediation and non-binding fact-finding often gives both sides an opportunity to get a better view of the other side's perspective. The Employer still retains the ability not to accept the employee's proposed ideas, but going through mediation or non-binding fact-finding often changes each party's position and helps find a middle ground where an agreement can be reached.

PEERA has worked for many years, and it has proven to be mutually beneficial. It even gives municipal employers an opportunity to remove themselves from the process if they see fit. It gives employees a formal process to discuss issues that yield positive results. In all, I urge you to not pass Senate Bill 179 and allow employees to continue to work with their employers through direct discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Hendrickson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeremy Hendrickson
Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer