



Testimony before the  
House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee

Matthew Hall, Business Agent  
Teamsters Local Union 696

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### **Support House Bill 2315**

Mrs. Chairwoman and members of the committee:

My name is Matthew Hall and I am a Business Agent at Teamsters Local Union 696, The Teamsters represent around 10,000 workers in the state of Kansas, approximately 1,500 of which are school bus drivers. I am here today to talk with you about why this bill is very much needed in Kansas. This is a matter of equity, safety and retention.

In Kansas, workers that work for private employers are able to draw unemployment when they are laid off. Private sector custodians, food service workers and monitors on school buses, can all draw unemployment while private school bus drivers cannot. This is very rare in the region, in fact every surrounding state already allows for drivers to draw unemployment when they meet the requirements while Kansas does not. This is creating an inequitable situation with this industry.

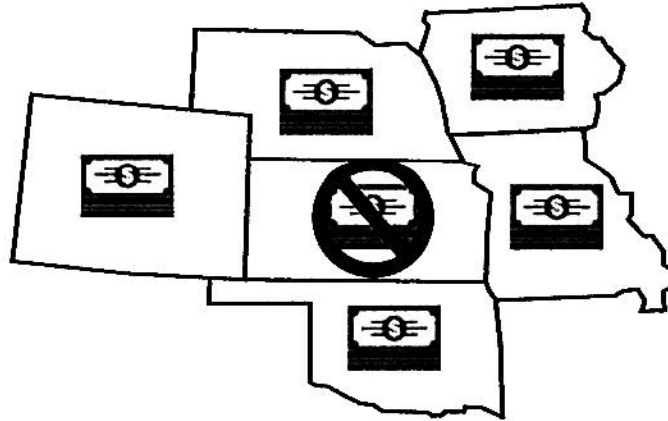
This inequitable situation leads to retention issues for the industry. When drivers don't have economic security in the summer months then they are either forced to go without or are forced into other jobs, many times not to return. I have personally heard stories of drivers having their electricity turned off in the summer months because they cannot afford to keep it on: Wichita was short 10% of their work force when this last school year started. This causes longer routes, with our children being on the bus for more time and for the companies to have to rely on out of state drivers with no area knowledge to cover the runs they have. With a nation wide CDL shortage this is only an issue that is going to get worst.

This is an industry with high safety and background standards. Retaining and recruiting the best drivers is key to the well being of our children and the public at large, they haul our most precious cargo. Our drivers undergo safety training of throughout the year and when they get hired. When a company losses an experienced driver because they cant afford to work at this job anymore the company, the children and the community lose all that knowledge and experience.

In closing we ask you to support HB 2315. With 800 million dollars in the unemployment fund it is well past time for us to allow the fair and equitable treatment of this industry to prevail.

Matthew Hall

## OUR NEIGHBORS HAVE UI



## WHY NOT US?

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K.S.A. 44-706(p) was added to Kansas law in 1987, denying private contractor school bus drivers who were off work between academic terms. *See* L. 1987, ch. 192, § 1. The law has not changed in the last 32 years.

Most states in our region, however, appear to permit payment to private contractor bus drivers. I confirmed with **Nebraska, Iowa, Ohio, and Missouri** that they do not deny private contractor bus drivers. I reviewed the statutes for **Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Colorado** and they appear to permit payments to private contractor bus drivers, but I have not confirmed that with any staff from those particular states.

The only states within our USDOL region that also deny private contractor bus drivers are **Indiana and Michigan**. Indiana denies a more broadly based group of industries who have regular vacation or leave periods and so their statutory provision permitting denying private contractor bus drivers is not education specific. For Michigan, and like Kansas, the private contractor would need to be contracting with the school.

**Minnesota's** laws appear to possibly permit denial of private contractor bus drivers, but I was not able to confirm this with staff from the state.