



**TESTIMONY OF
Sarah LaFrenz, President
KANSAS ORGANIZATION OF STATE EMPLOYEES (KOSE)
March 18, 2019**

Chairman Lynn and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

As President of the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), I am providing written testimony in opposition of SB 175, which would, under the guise of “public employee choice”, allow public employee Union members to drop their Union membership with a written or email request at any time to their Kansas public employer.

We oppose SB 175 because it is an unnecessary and unfair bill that targets the hard working civil servants of our state.

As the Legislature considers SB 175, KOSE respectfully requests you each recall and consider that Kansas has been a right to work state since an amendment to the Kansas Constitution in 1958. Because of this existing amendment, public employees already make a conscious and active choice to join their union and pay union dues. No one is coerced or forced to join. SB 175 would strip labor organizations of their ability to manage their membership practices, while leaving other membership organizations and companies free to engage in the same practices. The true purpose of this bill is to weaken the collective voice of the membership of our Union.

The Kansas Department of Corrections declared an emergency related to staffing levels at El Dorado Correctional Facility on 2/12/2019, and workers there are required to work up to 18 hours per day. Other facilities are similarly stressed, with mandated overtime happening 3-4 times a week at Larned Mental Health Correctional Facility currently. The Kansas Department of Transportation struggles to hire heavy equipment operators and keep our roads safely repaired and maintained. And our Kansas mental health facilities, specifically in Osawatomie and Larned, continue to be understaffed and consistently mandate workers for overtime – on top of their already scheduled 8 hour shift - daily. And on February 28, the Larned State Hospital reported a 74% vacancy rate for Licensed Practical Nurses at that facility alone. These are the real issues that require legislation.

In closing, I would urge you to remember we have actual pressing issues to deal with – like staffing, pay, and safety for state employees – which have, to date, not been addressed with legislation that would help state employees. We call upon you to stop the distractions and divisions – and to invest in Kansas – and to invest in the Kansans who serve our state.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this written testimony.

The Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE) is a union for executive branch state employees, and the largest union of state employees in Kansas. All non-supervisory, non-confidential employees in the executive branch of

Kansas state government (exclusive of higher education) are eligible to join KOSE. KOSE is local 300 - dually affiliated with both AFT and AFSCME. info@koseunion.org