



To: Representative Fred Patton and Members of the Committee
From: Matt Hall & Ty Dragoo, Co-Chairs of the Working Kansas Alliance
Re: Testimony in Opposition to the Kansas Chambers Attempt to Absolve Employers of Liability
Date: May 13, 2020

Chairman Patton and members of the committee,

We write to you today to urge strong opposition the Kansas Chambers attempt to absolve liability of negligent businesses. This is an agenda that provides no protections for the more than 500,000 Kansas workers we represent.

This U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Kansas Chamber sponsored agenda wants to make it even more difficult to protect Kansas employees or consumers. They are already moving to get the Labor Department to give guidance on reducing mask requirements and lower the threshold to meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.

This dangerous agenda is using the COVID-19 pandemic to shove through a law to strip away a citizen's right to seek remedies from a business that was negligent in taking appropriate precautions to protect employees and customers. Instead, this effort would give total immunity to companies and reward them for not protecting the people they owe their success to – their employees and customers. This is in addition to the fact that today Kansas workers have absolutely no protection when it comes to workers' compensation.

There are now more than 70,000 Americans dead and we all know this number will unfortunately continue to rise. While the 500,000 Kansas workers we represent all want things to return to normal and to get back to work, these workers want to know their employers are going to protect them from the virus. Yet, the Kansas Chamber's push to reopen Kansas focuses on only protecting the employers from any liability due to the pandemic.

This is not a game. This is literally a life and death situation. Instead, the dangerous Chamber agenda is all about saving a buck on the corporate balance sheet. We demand Kansas government put the safety of its citizens first and ignore this attempt to use a horrible pandemic to strip away Kansans rights.

We urge the members of the Legislature to vote NO on any bill which absolves companies of liability for their own negligence.

Sincerely,

Matt Hall
Co-Chair
Working Kansas Alliance

Ty Dragoo
Co-Chair
Working Kansas Alliance

SMART Transportation Division

Teamsters 696

International Association of Fire Fighters

Kansas National Education Association

Kansas Coalition of Public Retirees

Kansas Organization of State Employees

Kansas AFL-CIO

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 304

Kansas AFT

Wichita Hutchinson Labor Federation

Kansas Chiropractic Association

Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 441

Laborers 1290

Service Employees International Union Local 513

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Teamsters

Greater Kansas City Building & Construction Trades Council

Boilermakers Local 83

Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers & Grain Millers Local 218

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 304

Carpenters Regional Council St. Louis – Kansas City