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House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development  
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Sub for House Bill 2027

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee - During my 40 years of teaching music in Franklin County Kansas, I have witnessed many changes in our educational system. My impression is that during most of that time we have continued making steady progress in improving the educational opportunities for the students under our care. Research has consistently shown that the number one variable in the success or failure of a student's educational experience is the expertise of the teacher. For many years, Kansas has attracted teachers that are both well trained and dedicated to excellence. I obviously didn't become a teacher to make a lot of money. I have always taught music because I can make money doing something that I really enjoy and look forward to every single day—helping my students learn the skills that will allow them to love making music as much as I.

For the most part, I have always felt valued by my students and their parents and I believe most of my colleagues have felt the same way. We have also felt valued by our administrators and school boards. Throughout the years, we have collaborated on building a school system that constantly is striving to improve the way we do business. Collaboration is the key word here. Success is not built from the top down, but rather from the bottom up. Teachers and staff are energized when they feel they have ownership in the process. A key part of that feeling of ownership is the use of collective bargaining in creating an educational environment that attracts good teachers into the system and providing incentives to retain them. Our collective bargaining system in Kansas has been painstakingly built step by step over many years and continues to serve us well.

In my early years of teaching, I taught in a school that negotiated every year but had no master contract. The only written record of what was negotiated was the notes that were taken and put in folders by the teachers and the board. Sometimes those notes weren't always in agreement when questions arose. As the lead negotiator, I pushed for and we ultimately got a master contract in place—a huge improvement over the system we had previously been using. In one document we were now able to keep track of important items such as salary, supplemental contracts, fringe benefits, sick leave and personal leave. We also knew exactly the wording that was negotiated involving such things as grievances, evaluations, reduction in force, retirement incentives, professional development, school calendar, sick leave pool, planning periods, payroll deductions and association rights.

Unfortunately, we are now facing a bill that would roll back the gains that have been made in collective bargaining through the years. Sub for HB 2027 severely restricts mandatorily negotiable items to only a handful and labels many others “permissible.” In fact, the bill effectively cancels any current contract provisions except for the few

mandatory items, making them null and void. In addition, this bill would allow multiple bargaining agents in units as small as one member. Boards will not want to negotiate with so many groups, so may instead choose to bargain with none. And they certainly won't feel any pressure to bargain "permissible" items. We all know that those will end up on the non-starter list. So essentially, this moves us back in time about 50-60 years!

The bottom line is this: exactly how does this bill improve public education in Kansas? By destroying collective bargaining as we know it, will you attract good teachers to our profession and create incentives that will keep them there? Or will you end up driving away the best and brightest, the ones who have the most to offer our students? I cannot see those people wanting to be employed where their input is devalued, where they feel they have no sense of ownership and they essentially feel powerless. Will they want to work in a state where a school district does not have to offer any recourse to a grievance if a contract has been violated? Will they want to work in a state where districts are allowed to offer individual contracts with salaries based on how much the teacher butters up the principal or give A's to all of the children of board members?

Our students need good teachers and they need those teachers to stick around and not leave after just a few years in the profession. Please vote against Sub for HB 2027. It's bad for our kids and bad for public education in Kansas!