

Chairman Lynn and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

As a steward of the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), as well as a long-time state employee, I am providing written testimony in opposition of SB 361, which would impose government overreach upon the judgements of individual Kansans.

I oppose SB 361 because it is an unnecessary and unfair bill that targets the hard-working civil servants of our state. As the Legislature considers SB 361, 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. The true purpose of this bill is to weaken the collective voice of the membership of our Union.

Kansas mental health facilities, specifically in Larned, continue to be understaffed and consistently mandate workers for overtime – on top of their already scheduled 8-hour shift - daily. On February 28, the Larned State Hospital reported a 70% vacancy rate for Licensed Practical Nurses at that facility alone. Lack of appropriate longevity pay and consistent pay raises have stopped staff seasoned staff from advancing to higher positions. The ability to attract and retain state employees as well as pay them properly (among other pressing problems) are where actual issues lie at my worksite.

In closing, I would urge you to remember we have actual continuing pressing issues to deal with which require the attention of elected officials and representatives. We call upon you to stop the distractions and divisions – and to place real focus on the issues at hand for the Kansans we all represent.

Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony.

Diane Walker