



**WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY**

**Sarah LaFrenz, President**

**Kansas Organization of State Employees**

**Senate Committee on Transportation**

**2 February 2022**

**Oppose SB 379**

Chairperson Petersen and members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah LaFrenz and I am the president of KOSE, the union that represents workers in state agencies across Kansas. This includes employees of the Kansas Department of Transportation who maintain, clear, and build our roads.

SB 379 would legalize the use of autonomous motor vehicles (ARVs) for “middle mile” transportation of goods. We have some significant concerns over the safety of the use of these vehicles, especially in regard to the safety of KDOT road crews.

There are currently no guarantees that ARVs will be able to correctly identify the presence of road crews and the work they are performing. When KDOT workers are repainting road markings, clearing debris, or preparing for construction, they create new and temporary conditions on the roads that can change traffic patterns, lane sizes, and speed limits. What an unspeakable tragedy it would be if these ARVs failed to correctly identify a traffic cone or a road signaling sign and struck these workers. This is a huge risk that is completely unaccounted for in the bill

This leads me to my second major concern. Companies like Gatik tout their ARVs’ “safety feature” of just stopping in the road if the vehicle encounters something it doesn’t understand. A stopped vehicle on a highway, especially one that comes to an immediate stop, is a recipe for disaster and will cause major accidents for other drivers. We also currently do not know how long it would take for a stopped ARV to go through the process of communicating the situation to a human supervisor on when and how to move again.

Many of our other concerns regarding safety, regulation, liability, and transparency are echoed in the testimony of other opponents to this bill.

We urge the members of the Senate Committee on Transportation to oppose SB 379 in its current form. There are human lives at stake, and simply too many unanswered questions and unacceptable dangerous possibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

**Kansas Organization of State Employees**

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