



**TESTIMONY OF
Sarah LaFrenz, President, AFT Kansas
March 17, 2021**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2411

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony strongly opposing HB 2411.

AFT Kansas is a federation of fourteen public employee organizations, including the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE) and the United Teachers of Wichita (UTW). The federation represents workers on the frontlines of the pandemic response, including corrections officers, health care workers, teachers, snowplow drivers, and more. Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, our number one priority has been collaborating with state and local officials to ensure that workers had the safest possible working conditions so that they could carry on with the essential jobs they do for the public.

As President of AFT Kansas, I have been encouraged and uplifted by the strong working relationship between management and frontline workers, including educators, through each of the challenges that have emerged as a consequence of COVID-19. Inevitable disagreements have largely resulted in compromise instead of employer-employee conflict, and the result benefits all Kansans. In short, the system is working, much as it has in the fifty years that the Professional Negotiations Act (PNA) has governed the relationship between professional organizations and school boards.

HB 2411 is therefore a solution in search of a problem. Worse yet, the bill's effect will in fact be to create a problem where there is none.

Specifically, the bill takes aim at the principle of majority representation. Bargaining representatives are accountable to all the teachers they represent, members of the professional organization or otherwise, because, if representatives carry out their duties inadequately, a majority of the bargaining unit can terminate the unit's affiliation with the organization. These representatives can claim to *represent* employees in negotiations only because the employees have expressly authorized it. HB 2411 eliminates this central idea from the equation of employer-employee relations under the PNA, empowering boards of education to determine which professional organization may be tasked with representing employees.

Just as if the prosecution in a criminal case had appointed a defendant's defense attorney, it would be fair for employees to ask of their representatives in bargaining: just who is my professional organization accountable to and whose interests will the organization first consider? Mine or my employers?

HB 2411 makes these conflicts of interest inevitable. Employers, too, would be placed in the unenviable position of arbitrating disputes between rival employee organizations and fraying an employer-employee relationship that as of this hearing is strong and serves the public interest. There is simply nothing constructive about this bill.

On behalf of AFT Kansas, I urge the committee **not** to support HB 2411.

Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony.