

Chairman and Committee Members

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. I will try to keep this short and to the point. I am commissioner Stan McEvoy from Decatur County in the Northwest corner of the state. Decatur county has less than 2,800 people with a limited work force available

I am writing in support of HB 2295 exempting motor grader operators from having to obtain a CDL license. The Decatur County Commissioners all agree that this is an unnecessary requirement that adds an additional burden to hiring and keeping employees. It is also an added expense to the county. We believe HB 2295 would be a positive change for all counties, but especially for smaller counties.

We do not feel that a motor grader operator needs to have a CDL to operate the equipment. There are a lot of farm kids that are fourteen and fifteen years old who are driving tractors, combines and much larger equipment that travel much faster than a motor grader on the highways and county roads. They are not required to have any license at all. A motor grader moves much slower and is hardly ever on a highway. A CDL does not teach an operator how to run the motor grader. A CDL is geared more for truck drivers which the county has plenty of. We teach and fully instruct the employees on how to run and operate the motor graders ourselves before allowed to go on the roads.

New CDL rules are set to take effect next year that would make things even more expensive. To our knowledge there is only one place in the state for an employee can get a CDL for a motor grader and that is in Beloit. The new rules say you must be approved using the vehicle you will be driving. Does that mean we have to haul a road grader to Beloit to have our operators certified? We are not sure? This could be even a bigger expense for counties. We would have to send them to a school in Beloit for a CDL class. We would have money in the cost of sending the employee there. We have travel, lodging, as it is more than a day training, cost of the training itself, loss of that employee working back home and the scheduling headaches as we are usually always low on road and bridge employees.

The counties problems continue after that which results in lost time, training and money. You can pick up a paper in Northwest Kansas and see every county is looking for road and bridge employees. There are even more employment ads for truck drivers. The counties hire an employee, we train them, send them off to get their CDL and a month or two later they quit. They find a better job after we have taken care of all their expenses of getting a CDL. This is a constant reality for counties. We are unable to pay the wages an employee may get to drive a truck for another employer. We have to respect a person's right to make more money if they can. It is like a revolving door trying to keep employees.

We know that we have to have truck drivers with CDL's. We are fine with that. We however would not have to send everyone to get a CDL if there was not the requirement for motor grader operators to have one. Those employees could easily run other equipment and not drive a truck. Many of the employees do not want to drive a truck. They just want to run the road maintenance and building equipment and are very happy doing it.

In conclusion removing the requirement for motor grader operators to have a CDL would be a major help and save a lot of money and time for county governments. HB 2295 makes a lot of sense. The Decatur County Commissioners hope the committee and legislature will agree with us. I appreciate your understanding and consideration.

Respectfully,
Stan McEvoy - District 1 Decatur County Commissioner

