

## HB2160 Proponent Written Only Testimony

Chairman Bergquist and Members of the Committee,

HB 2160 is an important step toward ensuring accountability and transparency in local government by protecting municipal employees from retaliation when they report misconduct, legal violations, or public safety concerns.

Whistleblowers serve a crucial role in safeguarding taxpayer resources and upholding the integrity of our government institutions. Without proper protections, employees may fear retaliation and choose to remain silent about issues that need to be addressed. By explicitly prohibiting disciplinary action against municipal employees who report fraud, financial mismanagement, or threats to public health and safety, this bill helps create an environment where ethical concerns can be raised without fear of losing one's job or facing other repercussions.

Additionally, HB 2160 provides municipalities with reasonable safeguards, ensuring that employees are not protected for knowingly false disclosures or the release of confidential information. This balance helps maintain responsible whistleblower protections without enabling bad-faith claims.

While I strongly support this bill, I do have concerns regarding the clarity of Section 1(d)(1), which states that nothing in the bill prohibits a supervisor from requiring an employee to inform them of legislative or auditing agency requests for information. The language is vague as to whether such a requirement is mandatory for all municipalities or left to the discretion of each entity. It also does not specify when an employee must report such an interaction—before or after speaking with an auditing agency or legislator. This lack of clarity could lead to inconsistent applications of the law and may even create an unintended chilling effect on whistleblowers if municipalities impose overly burdensome reporting requirements.

To strengthen the bill, I would encourage the committee to consider clarifying this section to ensure that any reporting requirement does not unintentionally undermine the protections intended for whistleblowers. Providing a clear timeframe—such as requiring employees to inform supervisors within a reasonable period after the interaction—would help ensure transparency while still protecting employees from potential retaliation.

In conclusion, HB 2160 is a strong step toward promoting accountability and ethical governance at the municipal level. I appreciate the committee's attention to this important issue and urge you to support this bill while considering refinements to ensure its effectiveness.

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Sue

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Sedgwick County Precinct Committeewoman