

## Testimony for HB2160- Whistle blower Act

My name is Anne Dare resident of Fort Scott, Bourbon County, Kansas. I have been active in following my county commission since 2019.

In December 2021 the commissioners at that time decided a county CFO was necessary to track county spending and clean up county records. The county had audit violations for at least seven years prior. A person was hired and a contract signed. I was concerned that this was an unnecessary expense. I was under the impression that the county treasurer and county clerk should have been able to handle the appropriate tasks to reconcile and accurately make an accounting of all the county's expenses. The commissioners told me other wise. I attended county commission meetings regularly and asked on several occasions if it was still necessary to have hired a CFO, the commissioners assured me on several occasions that the CFO was cleaning up records and saving the county tens of thousands if not hundred's of thousands of dollars. I eventually accepted this new position as necessary to the financial health of the county.

Fast forward to early 2024. It became increasingly apparent that the tone of communication between the commissioners and the CFO was changing from one of thankfulness to animosity. The commissioners appeared reluctant to accept the CFO's explanations for budget law, cash law, and state statutes when different topics came up. As an observer at meetings it was also evident to me that the commissioners were not willing to learn governmental accounting and what that means to the finances of the county.

The tension continued to grow through the budget process of 2024. The CFO had to reiterate the actions needed to balance the budget, stay revenue neutral or not, raise the mil levy or not at several meetings. Again making it obvious that the commissioners did not come prepared to do the hard work of creating a viable budget. In the end a budget was passed 2-1, a budget that did not include funding the CFO position. At the last several meetings of 2024 comments such as "we were fed wrong information," referring to the CFO, to justify increases. To say the atmosphere was contentious is an understatement. It became evident that they wanted to remove the CFO position but couldn't because of a resolution that was passed in early 2021 that required a 3-0 vote to remove the CFO and other positions.

During this time the CFO also handled the HR responsibilities. So the bottom line is this, who does the CFO go to to lodge a complaint? Where do other county employees take complaints when the job duties of the current HR director are undermined by self serving commissioners?

If whistle blower protection laws are important on the state and federal levels they also need to be important in our smallest government entities. I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of this bill and garner the necessary support to have it enacted as law.

Thank you for serving the constituents of Kansas

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