
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2160: Protection for Municipal Employees Reporting Unlawful, Unethical, or Dangerous Conduct

Shane Walker
Chief Operating Officer
Bourbon County Kansas
February 11th, 2025

Chairman Bergquist, Vice Chairman Blex and other Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Bill 2160. My name is Shane Walker, and I have served as a county employee for the past 20 years for Bourbon County as well as a Fort Scott City Commissioner. I am here today because I believe that House Bill 2160 is an essential step toward creating a safer, more accountable workplace for municipal employees across the state of Kansas.

Over the course of my two decades of service, I have seen firsthand incidents of unlawful, unethical, self-dealing and, at times, dangerous conduct within our workplace. However, like many others, I have refrained from reporting these incidents out of fear of retaliation, fear of job loss, and fear of negative professional consequences. These fears are not unfounded. In many cases, municipal employees who speak out or try to challenge the status quo have faced punitive actions, whether overt or subtle, that deter others from coming forward.

As public servants, our duty is to serve the community with integrity, transparency, and a strong ethical foundation. However, when employees are intimidated into silence or discouraged from reporting misconduct, it undermines the very values we are meant to uphold. I have witnessed situations where important issues, whether related to safety, mismanagement, or unethical conduct, were never addressed simply because employees lacked the protection they needed to report these issues without fear of retribution.

House Bill 2160 is a critical piece of legislation that will help ensure that municipal employees like myself, who want to do the right thing, will be protected if they come forward with information about unlawful, unethical, or dangerous conduct. By establishing clear legal protections for whistleblowers, this bill will make it easier for employees to report misconduct without the paralyzing fear of retaliation. It will also signal that Kansas is committed to transparency and accountability within its local governments, reinforcing the trust of the public that their leaders and employees are held to the highest standards.

I support House Bill 2160 not only because it would have protected me and my colleagues in the past, but also because it would give employees the confidence to step forward in the future, knowing they can report issues without sacrificing their livelihoods or careers. It is essential that we take proactive measures to ensure that municipal workplaces are safe and that those who serve the public are not silenced by fear of retribution.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the committee to support House Bill 2160, which would ensure greater protection for municipal employees who report misconduct. It will create a more transparent and

ethical work environment, protect the public, and allow employees to do their jobs with the confidence that their rights and safety will be upheld.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have either by phone or e-mail. Feel free to reach out to me through Senator Shallenburger's office if there happens to be any questions. I apologize for not being there in person but with the weather situation we thought it best not to risk driving up for the hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shane Walker', is written over a horizontal line.

Shane Walker
Chief Operating Officer
Bourbon County Kansas