



## **Testimony in Support of SB 256**

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### **Kansas State Legislature Senate Committee on Government Efficiency**

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Chair Erickson, Members of the Committee,

I'm Roy Lenardson from the Opportunity Solutions Project, here to champion Senate Bill 256—the Back to Work Act. This bill requires full-time state employees to do their jobs where the work happens: their assigned office, facility, or field site. Remote work scatters strength. SB 256 pulls it back together.

Kansas isn't charting new territory here. Ohio's Governor Mike DeWine ordered state workers back to the office five days a week, arguing public service thrives on presence. California's bringing most back four days, rolling back remote-friendly policies. Even left-leaning states that embraced telework are reversing course. Why? The evidence is piling up that shows remote setups erode teamwork, cut productivity, and blur the mission. SB 256 sets a clear standard—get people back in the game—while leaving room for agency heads to approve exceptions when it makes sense.

The upside is difficult to ignore. In-person work fuels collaboration—spontaneous chats beat virtual lag every time, sparking ideas that don't happen on Zoom. It tightens accountability—when oversight's close, tasks don't drift. And it respects taxpayers—empty state offices are a waste of Kansas dollars. Physical presence isn't a relic; it's a proven edge.

Now, look at Kansas's situation. A recent audit found 30 percent of executive branch employees working remotely, with 45 percent eligible. That's nearly half the state workforce off site, away from teams and direct supervision. Numbers like that aren't just stats—they're warning signs. Remote employees wait on email chains for answers a five-minute hallway talk could fix. IT teams scramble to secure scattered systems, burning time and budget—data breaches don't wait for slow fixes. And new hires? They're stuck with virtual onboarding, missing the hands-on mentoring that builds competence fast. These aren't hypotheticals; they're drags on efficiency Kansas can't afford.

SB 256 isn't about chaining people to desks—it's about forging a stronger, sharper state workforce. Agency heads can greenlight exceptions, keeping it practical. Critics might say flexibility's king, but flexibility without guardrails is a problem. Other states prove it: Ohio's back-to-office push cut delays; California's hybrid shift boosted output. Kansas should join that trend.

I urge the committee to pass SB 256. It's not nostalgia—it's necessity. The bill delivers a government that works together, in person, fully dialed in to serve Kansas citizens. Remote work had its moment; now it's time to bring the team back to where they belong.