

March 6, 2025

## TESTIMONY OF CHEYENNE JACKSON

Opponent – Senate Bill 256

To: Senate Government Efficiency Committee

Chairperson Erickson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Cheyenne Jackson

I have been employed with the State of Kansas since 2016 and since that time being able to work from home has been the most peaceful of those years. Although we have always been told remote work is never certain, within my department and direct unit we have grown closer than we ever were when we were in person. COVID did several things on not only the community but also state employees. I can't speak for every state employee but I know in the heart of COVID a lot of state employees received administrative leave while I still had to work. I work for DCF in the reporting center so regardless of the weather conditions or a national disaster, I am required to work. I can't say the pay OR the benefits are the drive for my job, it's the passion I have for what I do and the vulnerable population I serve.

Last year my father in law passed away and since then my mother in law has had a decline in her health. My husband and I are planning to sell our current home and move in with my mother in law to help take care of her. If I had to return to work in the office that would place a lot of stress on my family. Not only do I have an elderly relative that needs looked after but I have 2 children (2 and 6 years old) that are out of school/daycare a lot. The many perks about working from home is not having the extra expense of putting my 2 year old in daycare. I have family members/friends that assist me in watching my child if I must take a call or finish something for work. I have maintained a high quality of work while working from home and I have been asked to have new staff and/or field staff shadow me due to my quality of work.

I have discussed returning to work with my supervisor and she mentioned very valid points on PRC remaining having the ability to work from home. First, PRC supervisor can monitor staff better since working from home because we have a system that we must log into everyday that shows exactly what we are working on during the entire duration of our shift. PRC staff also must submit a daily or weekly tracker to their supervisor to show exactly the work they completed each week. In our department there has been set guidelines that is quota (6-8 reports per day) is not met for the month then the staff must return to the office to work until quota is met. This was put in place because working from home is a privilege. Since working from home not only has PRC been able to keep employees but our numbers have gone way up and have improved since we worked in the office. In this position we do not meet with clients or the public so this shouldn't be a considering factor to bring all state employees back to the office.

In my current position I am an essential worker so with that I must sign up to cover 2 holiday shifts per year another with working any inclement weather days. PRC doesn't have many benefits since the job is very mentally draining and then you throw on the essential part, not many people want to work a department that has such little benefits but working from home has been a HUGE benefit for our department. There are staff that wouldn't be able to return to working in the office due to children, 1 vehicle for the family, or the distance from their home to the office. PRC has hired staff outside of service centers so some staff it could take them 2+ hours just to get to a service center everyday for work. PRC supervisor hasn't been told to stop hiring outside of the service centers.

I hear some of the worst of the worst reports every day and having the ability to work from home where I am in my own comfy place so that if I need to take a quick breather from a horrible report, I can take 5 minutes to gather my thoughts and not feel judge for breaking down in an office full of coworkers. This job is not mentally for the weak. I can work a child death report and then must jump back to my next call where a family may just need assistances or services. I strive to be the best I can be for reporters and they would never know the day I have had or the report I had just finished.

As you are aware the first part of 2025 has been extreme with winter weather. During those inclement weather days, PRC staff have had to show up when we have had no work to do. If we wanted to take the day off like other state employees, we had to use our own leave while other state employees were paid inclement weather days. This is a problem. The problem is although we are the backbone for the state during the worst of the worst we are still here to protect and prevent. There should be some type of additional compensation for essential workers that work during the times the states needs us the most. I feel giving essential workers the same amount of leave to use later would be fair. I understand that "life isnt fair" but this is 2025 we need to give essential workers the same benefits as everyone else because of the important role they are for the state. In my position when CPS/APS field staff are off due to inclement weather that puts more work on us because we must notify law enforcement to ensure the safety of a person since our field staff are off. I would like to be able to enjoy a snow day with my children just like all the other state employees. During the inclement weather days, we were waiting hours to get a report which then only puts a stress on making quota for the month due to the lack of reports coming in.

I understand I am just a small fish in your big pond of concerns to deal with but I truly appreciate my concerns being acknowledged and considered for the SB256 bill for state employees to return to the office. I will attach a copy of my PMP to confirm the above information is correct. If you have any questions or comments I can be reached at 785-383-1738 or Cheyenne.ables12@gmail.com

Thank you,

Cheyenne Jackson