

**Date:** 03-06-2025

**Bill number:** SB 256 - The Back to Work Act

**Disposition:** Opposition

**Name of conferee:** Amber Schmidt

**On Behalf of:** Self - Private Citizen

Dear Chair Erickson and Honorable Members of Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill No. 256, also known as the Back to Work Act. While I understand the intent behind this bill, I believe it is an unnecessary and counterproductive measure that would negatively impact both state employees and the efficiency of government operations.

First and foremost, this bill disregards the proven benefits of hybrid and remote work arrangements. A 2024 study by Stanford University<sup>1</sup> found that hybrid work benefits companies and their employees. Specifically, that “employees who work from home two days a week are just as productive, likely to get promoted, and far less prone to quit.” Additionally, a survey by Owl Labs in 2023 reported<sup>2</sup> that 79% of managers feel their teams are more productive when working remote/hybrid, and their 2024 study indicated this metric did not change much in the last year<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, there is a high risk of turnover in organizations that eliminate flexible work arrangements. According to a 2024 Gallup study, up to 64% of employees would look for another job if remote work is no longer offered. Mandating full-time, in-office attendance for all state employees—regardless of the nature of their work—fails to consider these well-documented advantages.

Another key consideration is cost. This bill will result in unnecessary financial burdens for both employees and the state government. Many state employees have structured their lives around hybrid or remote work, saving on commuting costs, childcare expenses, and time lost in transit. Forcing them back into an office setting without justifiable cause could lead to decreased morale, increased absenteeism, and greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining top talent. Additionally, the state itself may face increased costs related to office space, utilities, and other infrastructure requirements. Research has also shown that remote workers often earn lower salaries than their in-office counterparts. A study published in the *Journal of Population Economics* in 2025<sup>4</sup> found that employees transitioning from remote to in-office roles experienced an average salary increase of 29.2%. This was confirmed in a 2024 Owl Labs

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<sup>1</sup> Bloom, N. (2024, June 12). *Study finds hybrid work benefits companies and employees*. Stanford Report. <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2024/06/hybrid-work-is-a-win-win-win-for-companies-workers>

<sup>2</sup> <https://owllabs.com/state-of-hybrid-work/2023>

<sup>3</sup> <https://owllabs.com/state-of-hybrid-work/2024>

<sup>4</sup> Pabilonia, S.W., Vernon, V. Remote work, wages, and hours worked in the United States. *J Popul Econ* 38, 18 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01064-9>

study of 2,000 managers and employees in the United States, where 22% of workers said they would expect a pay increase if they were no longer allowed to work hybrid or remote<sup>5</sup>. If Kansas mandates full-time in-office work, the state may be forced to offer higher wages to attract and retain employees, further exacerbating financial burdens. If agencies must expand office capacity to comply with the law, these potential savings could be lost, placing an undue financial burden on the state.

Another concern is that this legislation does not adequately consider modern workforce trends. Many private-sector employers and other government agencies across the country have successfully implemented flexible work policies that accommodate the needs of employees while maintaining operational efficiency. Kansas should be leading in workplace innovation, not rolling back progress by enforcing outdated, rigid work structures.

Moreover, the bill introduces unnecessary bureaucracy. Requiring agencies to file reports on granted exceptions and building lease costs does not inherently improve efficiency but instead creates an additional administrative burden. If the goal is cost savings, a more productive approach would be to evaluate how hybrid work arrangements could reduce the need for leased office space, rather than forcing employees back into offices without consideration for operational necessity.

Finally, this bill fails to account for the diversity of state jobs. While certain positions may require in-person presence, many roles—especially in IT, field inspection, and policy-oriented fields—can be performed effectively from remote locations. A one-size-fits-all mandate undermines the ability of agency leaders to make informed decisions based on the unique needs of their workforce and operational requirements.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill No. 256. Instead of restricting flexible work arrangements, I encourage a more thoughtful approach that prioritizes efficiency, employee well-being, and fiscal responsibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership and your willingness to listen to the concerns of Kansas residents.

Sincerely,

Amber Schmidt  
Private Citizen

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<sup>5</sup> <https://owllabs.com/state-of-hybrid-work/2024>