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Neutral Testimony for SB 479 Senate Committee on Education

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

The Northeast Johnson County cities of Prairie Village, Mission, Merriam, Roeland Park, and Westwood Hills appreciate the opportunity to testify neutral on SB 479, and respectfully request the inclusion of municipal employees in the legislation. We believe a strong state retirement plan is an important tool in building and strengthening the Kansas workforce, not just for teachers, but also for those individuals serving state and local governments. We believe KPERS, Tier II in particular, is an important tool in attracting individuals to careers in public service, and crucial for competing with the private sector.

Our cities in particular have a unique perspective on this issue, given the fact we are border cities and often see and experience firsthand the impact of policy implementations—or lack thereof—on both sides of the state line. We believe an attractive state employee pension system is one strategy to ensure we can compete with our neighbors in Missouri, while also ensuring we can retain and support professionals in their home state. A strong retirement plan is a crucial step in doing so.

Transferring state employees from KPERS III to KPERS II will not solve all of the state's current workforce challenges; however, we believe it is one important tool to help the state move forward in solving its qualified workforce challenges. Should you advance SB 479, we sincerely hope you will consider inclusion of local government employees to ensure a robust approach to the next phase of the state's retirement system.

Thank you for your consideration, and we welcome any questions or further discussion you may have on this matter.

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