



A New Day... A Better Way... For State Employees

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*Testimony Presented to the Kansas State Employee Pay Plan Oversight Commission*

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Good morning and thank you for your time to discuss the recommendations proposed by the Hay Group. My name is Phyllis Saye and I am here today as a member of KOSE and a Social Worker Specialist. Since the first day on the job, I have been a social worker. In December, I will happily celebrate fifteen years of service to the State of Kansas.

My colleagues and I spend our days helping people with complicated health, social, or financial problems. We assist families in need, children in poverty, and people who are the victims of abuse. Everyday, we see those who were dealt a heavy hand and need help to bring themselves out of the trenches. We provide counseling, advice, and direction for people who would otherwise have no way of bettering their situations. In order to really help these people, as a Social worker I have to be familiar with all assistance programs and services available for those in need. This requires continuing education to keep up with programs, funding, and their effectiveness. But at the end of the day, this is the job I want to do. Even though I often see people who are confused, scared, and troubled, my job is rewarding and I truly feel I am making someone's life a little easier to bear.

Regardless of the services we provide to the citizens of Kansas, social workers across the state currently lag nearly 25% behind the market rate in pay. Under the proposed plan, more than 400 social workers will fall under the "General Classified Pay Plan". More importantly, however, this plan is expected to effect close to 12,000 employees of the State of Kansas. Although this plan includes longevity consideration for pay increases, once an employee hits the market rate, only performance will be used to determine any increases. Therefore, regardless of the time I have spent as a social worker, new employees can be hired at a similar rate of pay. I am here today to tell you that this is not only unfair, but it will create an environment where the state is once again a stepping stone for other, better paying jobs. High quality services are not adequately provided when the state loses institutional knowledge. The state should not simply be a trampoline for training.

Everyone in this room is interested in giving the hardworking employees of the state of Kansas fair and equitable pay. That includes respecting tenure, protecting longevity, funding step increases and providing a pay that is not only competitive on a market rate, but also ensures the retention of employees in order to keep costs down. Treating workers decently is a motivation in itself, and thus, boosts productivity.

Such a plan as performance based pay is flawed on many levels. Fair and equitable pay can not be based solely on merit or performance. First, it is difficult to determine the precise measurement tool. Second, it is even more difficult to truly develop an objective rate. Most jobs that state employees do every day, and the services they provide are not easily measured on a level or performance. For example, is the quality of services valued above quantity?

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It is extremely difficult to objectively measure the quality and quantity of an individual's work in jobs that are service delivery focused such as public sector jobs. Therefore, evaluation systems must rely on the opinion and judgment of supervisors. There are too many variables of the day to day job that cannot simply be judged by a tool of any measurement. Additionally, if your supervisor is solely responsible for determining your wage increases, individuals are less likely to reveal problems or conflicts that could ultimately hinder the quality of services provided, or decrease the communication that is necessary to improve services and delivery of service.

Throughout my 15 years, I have had four supervisors, none of which have been similar in personality, structure, or performance. Such turnover in supervisory staff can also mean a change in relationships, and therefore, raises, under this plan. I believe that the current system that includes funded step increases based on a "Satisfactory" rating should stay in effect. Again, this is not an issue of perceived inadequacies of the current pay plan or structure. This a matter of funding salary increases on a regular basis. If the current plan cannot be funded, how are we to know this new system will bring equity and fairness? Salary increases and pay should not be left to the opinion of a supervisor.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, I would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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