



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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My name is Leo Schinstock and I am here today on behalf of the members of KOSE across the state and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning. I first began working for the state of Kansas in 1986 for five years, and have currently worked in my position as an MHDD Tech at Larned State Hospital since 2000. This work isn't easy, and the pay and benefits are not what keep me in this job. It is because I love my job and respect my coworkers that I stay in this position.

MHDD Techs are involved in every aspect of the daily lives of the patients. We make sure that patients take their medication and receive the proper meals. Patients are able to play games, watch TV and occasionally enjoy time away from the facility and go to a park. Literally, we help the patients handle the typical functions of day to day life. Importantly though, we are like their family. Sadly, some patients no longer have visitors and their families have given up on them. At Larned, the staff is able to give the patients a sense of stability which helps them function. We make sure that some of the most vulnerable citizens have the interaction and care that they would not receive anywhere else.

On another level, Larned State Hospital and the staff are responsible for the sexual predators. The rapists, the child molesters - some of the worst of the worst in society. All told, we deal with the people no one else in society wants to see.

Currently, the salaries of some of my colleagues such as Licensed Mental Health Techs lag nearly 19% behind the market average. Last year alone, the turnover rate at Larned State Hospital was more than 18%. The proposed plan from the Hay Group will place job classifications like mine and others under the "General Classified Pay Plan". Particularly, this plan will ultimately base all salary increases on performance or merit, and eventually, be redesigned to be an open range plan.

I am here today to tell you that I disagree with performance based pay for the jobs that we do. Similar structures and plans have failed in other states. It is extremely difficult to objectively measure the quality and quantity of an individual's work output in most public sectors jobs. How do you measure the work I do as a MHDD tech? What about the performance of driver license inspector? A plumber? An equipment operator? Or even an administrator? So-called "pay for performance" systems must rely on the perceptions of supervisors. The potential problems of such a system are exacerbated when used to determine the pay of employees that perform duties that are difficult to measure. **Bottom line: performance based pay is subjective.**

The most common problem with rating an individual employee is the fact that different supervisors can rate the same performance differently. My duties are always changing, and and day is never the same as the next. Additionally, supervisors may not apply the same judgment evenly. An even more frequent concern is that the evaluation process is often tainted by favoritism or used for building a case for undeserved discipline. Individual supervisors can use personal relationships and friendships in determining merit and the award of more pay.



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In the past 7 years I have spent at Larned, I have had too many supervisors to count. At one point, I was a back-up leader, although I had no clue who I was back-up to. This is a frequent problem, and on a daily basis, there can be confusion as to who is the supervisor for that day or shift. When considering pay for performance, turnover among supervisors is crucial. My raises or any increases can easily change overnight.

Finally, there is no way to implement any successful plan without adequate funding. Under the current system, employees are required to have at least a current "Satisfactory" rating in order to receive a step increase. Although more than 90% of state employees receive such a rating annually, the step increases have not been approved by the Legislature in the past, therefore, have not been funded in recent years. Regardless of how intricate or simple a pay plan may be, it is crucial to ensure that the plans are funded.

I feel that the current step plan is the best option. Salary increases should not be based on opinion or friendships. Such a system would create even more tension than what already exists. There is no way to create a perfect, objective means of evaluation. I would like to know how you rate distributing medication or being like a family member to someone who no longer has visitors?

Pay for performance does not focus on the job or the skills to perform the duties of a position. Performance based pay does not take into consideration responsibilities or effort required to adequately perform the job. Rather pay for performance is linked to individual performance against subjective standards and competing performances.

My supervisor and I may not always agree. Is this to mean that once I reach a certain level, regardless of how much time I have put into my career, any raise is supposed to be decided by my supervisor? I do a good job, and I know I do a good job. Those of us that work so hard in jobs that we love shouldn't have to worry about getting a raise on the whim of a supervisor. We've already had to deal with that problem in the Legislature.

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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Kansas Organization of State Employees, AFT/AFSCME, AFL-CIO  
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