

Testimony to the
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

February 24, 2021

House Bill 2354

Matt Blassingame, TPD Chief Steward

Topeka FOP Lodge 3

Chairperson Tarwater and members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2354. My name is Matt Blassingame and I am the Topeka Police Department Chief Steward for Topeka FOP Lodge #3. Topeka Lodge #3 represents approximately 500 active and retired sworn law enforcement officers in Shawnee County.

As the TPD Chief Steward, I represent approximately 270 bargaining unit members of the Topeka Police Department. I am honored and proud to report that all our bargaining unit members, as well as our 24 Command Staff members of management, are members of our lodge. This is a testament to the benefits we offer. We have 100% membership in our lodge because we offer great benefits and services to our membership. These benefits to our members can save them thousands to tens of thousands of dollars a year.

Membership to our lodge is voluntary. Members must opt in and they agree to voluntarily pay dues for a specified benefit. If members could opt out at any time without notice, it would create an undue hardship on the lodge, which is the membership. This would jeopardize the very benefits they join for. Many benefits are paid quarterly or annually. If a member could leave at any time without paying for benefits, they already agreed to, the other members would have to pay that additional cost. This is much like a business contract that both parties voluntarily entered. If someone wants to leave the lodge, we respect that, but it should not be allowed to be done anytime without notice.

The men and woman of our lodge work hard and jeopardize their safety daily for the citizens of Kansas. Please to not make it harder on us, and costlier to them, to provide the benefits they deserve.

Thank you for your time in reviewing my testimony. Topeka FOP Lodge #3 and its members oppose the passage of this bill.