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Dear Chairman Ostmeyer and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of Senate Bill 10, regarding open meetings, open records and charges limited.

As Cowley County Clerk I also serve as the Election Officer with a staff of four including myself. Cowley County population is 36,311. With a small staff there are many duties performed daily by a few people. When we receive open records requests we attempt to minimize the charge for anyone requesting the information because that is the nature of government to be open. If requests require specialized reports created to accommodate the request sometimes those reports take hours to compile the requested information. We always attempt to email when possible so there are no paper charges at all and only when the request is extraordinary do we even charge staff time fees. But the reality is that some requests can be large and cumbersome and very possibly due to normal staff workloads can require overtime to process the request. The fee charged remains at regular hourly rates, not overtime rates.

Removing the option to charge staff time fees can put a strain on local government budgets when we have been urged to tighten our belts on expenses and not raise taxes.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Karen D. Defore
Cowley County Clerk/Election Officer