

DANIELLE PETERSEN
RECORDER & CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT
RENVILLE COUNTY
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Good morning, Chairwoman Larson and members of the committee. My name is Danielle Petersen. I am the County Recorder and Clerk of District Court for Renville County. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today expressing my opposition to Senate Bill 2277.

I became the Clerk and Recorder in 2018 and prior to that was the Deputy Clerk and Recorder in both Renville and Burke counties from 2012 – 2018. From this experience I have worked in 2 different districts and with approximately 12 different Judges.

In my office, we have a combined Recorder and Clerk of Court office. I have one deputy employed in my office. We are both trained on Clerk of Court and Recorder duties. If this bill passes, we would need to completely restructure our office duties and positions. This would mean I would need to combine my deputy with another office in our county and this would likely end up eliminating an entire position in our county. The Senate Bill restructuring plan may work in a large county but in small rural counties this is not doable. Small rural counties are being allotted one full time employee. If that one employee was to take a sick day or vacation, a citizen was to come in and need to pay a ticket or file a protection order, they walk into a closed door. Would the citizens be expected to drive to the next county to file their protection order? We need to be available to our citizens at all times and having one person in a small county office will not do that. Which brings me to my next concern. Space! Space is already an issue in most counties. Courthouses all across the state are being expanded and rebuilt. Where are these new separated court offices going to be housed in the courthouses?

There are so many unknowns. How are we going to go from fifty-three Clerks of Court down to eight clerks? Do these positions get opened for all to apply? Or are all of the current state clerk of courts automatically keeping their clerk titles and the rest of the clerks get demoted to deputies. I have been given a pay scale that showed my wages if I was to choose to continue my job as a Deputy Clerk of Court, my wage would be \$56,520. I'm currently making \$66,390 which means I'm going to take a pay cut of \$9,870. Along with the pay cut I would be expected to change my hours from 9-4:30 to 8-4:30 and my case load would increase. So ultimately, I'd be working five more hours a week, be making \$9,870 less a year and my case load would dramatically increase.

The contract clerks have invested thousands of dollars running for these elected positions. A few years ago, some of us who are on the line spent thousands of our county dollars and invested hundreds of hours to become certified Court Managers. This was a ton of extra work and didn't come with any extra pay. This is the kind of dedicated people you have working in your counties. The Court stands to lose up to twenty-five contract clerks with years of experience. We are public servants and trusted faces in our counties. Please, vote to keep this local and vote in opposition of Senate Bill 2277.

While the Renville County Commissioners have not yet passed a resolution in opposition, it is on the agenda for the Commissioner meeting on January 24th.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Petersen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small apostrophe over the 'i' in "Danielle".

Danielle Petersen

Renville County Recorder & Clerk of Court