

Testimony Before the House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economics
Regarding HB 2310 - The Kansas C.A.R.E.S Act

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to share my family's story as you consider HB 2310 - The Kansas C.A.R.E.S Act. This legislation touches on issues that are not just policy for us, they are our everyday reality. I am here today not just as a parent, but as someone deeply invested in the lives of those who care for our children, who are our lifeline.

We are the proud parents of two incredible children, both wheelchair-bound, who have bravely endured multiple hip surgeries and replacements. Each surgery required them to be placed in a spica cast, a heavy cast that stretches from their waist down to their toes. Imagine, if you will, the struggle of lifting and moving your child when their body is encased in plaster. Imagine the heartbreak of seeing them in pain, knowing every transfer from their bed to a chair is a challenge, and every basic need requires assistance. It is not just physically demanding, it's emotionally overwhelming.

We rely on Direct Support Workers (DSWs) and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to help us provide the care our children need to live with dignity and joy. But finding and keeping these dedicated individuals has been nearly impossible. We currently employ three part-time workers, but turnover is a constant struggle. Many have left for higher-paying jobs with benefits and opportunities for growth that we simply cannot offer.

Our best and most consistent caregiver earned her CNA, moved to a nursing home, and now works at a hospital where she receives better pay, health insurance, and personal and sick leave. We haven't been able to replace her since. Her absence is not just a gap in our care, it's a hole in our hearts.

This isn't just our story; it's a systemic issue. DSWs and DSPs often feel their roles are dead ends: low wages, no benefits, and no future. How can we expect to find and keep people willing to pour their hearts into caring for our most vulnerable when we offer them so little in return?

HB 2310 - The Kansas C.A.R.E.S Act is a beacon of hope. It will:

1. **Highlight the Critical Shortage of Caregivers:** This Act will shine a light on the desperate need for qualified, compassionate caregivers in our state.
2. **Promote Career Growth:** By offering competitive wages, benefits, and clear career paths, we can make caregiving a respected and sustainable profession.
3. **Ensure Quality Care for Families:** With better training and support, we can ensure our children and countless others receive the competent, loving care they deserve.

Families like ours depend on the dedication of DSWs and DSPs. They are more than workers, they are lifelines, providing care, compassion, and stability in our lives. HB 2310 is not just about wages and benefits; it's about recognizing the humanity and value of those who care for our most vulnerable.

I urge you to support this legislation. For our children, for our caregivers, and for families like ours who depend on them every single day.

Sincerely,

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