

January 26, 2012

To: Representative Mark Rhoades  
Members, House Appropriations Committee

From: Ron Pasmore

RE: HB 2442

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written support for HB 2442, which would provide incentives to businesses for employing persons with severe disabilities. My name is Ron Pasmore. I am the President and CEO of KETCH located in Wichita, KS. We provide employment related services to persons with disabilities that assist them to become employed. I also serve on the Employment First Commission.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently studied the prevalence of children with a developmental disability and found that to be just under 14% of the general population. They also found that the prevalence had increased by over 17% from the 1990's. A lesson I have learned over my career in this field, is that public expenditures necessary to support the needs of persons with severe disabilities decreases proportionately to the degree that they are successfully integrated into the community. Segregation from the community is expensive. A key factor of living in the community for any of our citizens is the opportunity to be employed.

According to the US Census Bureau, the percent of all employed persons who have a severe disability is only 2.8%. Perhaps the single greatest barrier to employment for persons with severe disabilities is an attitudinal barrier that they cannot be productive in the workplace. We demonstrate on a daily basis that persons with severe disabilities can be productive members of the workforce. Employers we work with find that including persons with disabilities in their workforce adds to their bottom-line.

I have a couple of suggestions to strengthen the bill.

- The requirement for a business to employ a minimum of 20% of their workforce is higher than the natural prevalence of persons with severe disabilities to the general population. I suggest that 15% would be a goal that would better mirror the proportion of persons with disabilities to the general public.
- The underlying interest in saving public expenditures is good, but may not be directly realized from persons being removed from HCBS. Persons with severe disabilities we serve in employment settings require our assistance on a long term basis to maintain their employment. Private health insurance does not fund

this service. Without access to either HCBS or Working Healthy, they would lose the benefit they require to maintain employment.

- The savings realized from reduced use of Medicaid funded HCBS services, should be utilized to reduce the waiting list for HCBS services instead of reducing the Medicaid budget.

In summary, I believe this bill should be favorably acted upon, with the above modifications, to provide incentives to businesses to employ persons with severe disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Pasmore". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Ron Pasmore  
President/CEO