

March 13, 2013

To: Senator Julia Lynn, Chair &  
Members of the Committee on Commerce

From: Ron Pasmore, President/CEO, KETCH

RE: Substitute for SB195



Chair Lynn and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the substitute bill for SB 195. My name is Ron Pasmore. I work for KETCH, a community based organization that serves persons with disabilities in Sedgwick County. I also serve on the Employment First Commission.

I compliment the legislature and administration for interest in improving employment outcomes for Kansans with disabilities. It is my understanding that Kansas is the first in our nation to have passed a law, known as Employment First, and has received much positive recognition for doing so.

The task of improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities is very complicated. The underlying purpose of Employment First is to create the conditions that will facilitate employment as the outcome of participation in state funded services. Unemployment of persons with disabilities is a multifaceted problem that will not be solved by this law alone. Success relies upon willingness on the part of the person with a disability to seek employment, businesses willing to hire them, and the correct support system to make it successful for both parties.

The changes to the Employment First Commission introduced in this bill will allow it to broaden its focus include stakeholder education. Policy formulation and development is important, but ultimately, the goal of employment relies upon the will of persons with disabilities and employers to make it happen. It is my hope that the commission will provide more leadership on the topic on Employment First by:

- Active involvement of stakeholders in the identification of barriers and solutions to those barriers;
- Increasing stakeholders' knowledge about Employment First;
- Highlighting successful Employment First related programs and initiatives that are happening across Kansas; and
- Engaging in a collaborative process with state agencies as they seek to implement Employment First within their programs.

I am very much in favor of expanding the Employment First Commission to include an employer who has experience in employing persons with disabilities. Inclusion of employers in planning employment programs for persons with disabilities is critically important for creating credibility within the business community.