

March 4, 2015

Testimony of Valerie Cahill
House Commerce Committee
HB 2381: Kansas HOPE Act

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman Hutton,

My name is Valerie Cahill, and I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to be here and allow me to speak on the subject of Welfare Reform.

I was a recipient of TANF.

I believe that everyone should work for what they need and want.

For the months that I was receiving assistance from the State, I wasn't happy. It wasn't that I was not appreciative for the help, but because I knew that I could and should be doing better than what I was.

I thought I was doing everything I could to get back on track. It had been 10 months since I worked and I was frustrated.

I received a letter for DCF that in essence stated I needed to participate in the Work Training Program. My initial thought: I don't need these people to tell me how to work. I've worked all my life; I know how to do that.

But, I didn't have a job.

I then reported to DCF for the Work Training Program as a condition of continuing to receive State benefits.

What I know is this, when I entered the classroom for the first time, I saw people who were not like me, and I became even more frustrated. I heard a woman say, everyone in this room is no different from anyone else in this room. We are all on TANF, and we all need a job.

At that moment I said, "Ok, give me something else."

I realize anyone of us can find ourselves facing hard times. My circumstances were just a bit different than those sitting next to me and my motivation was to work, even though the job market had changed. I required direction on how to present myself, where to look and what to look for. It was clear anyone, everyone could benefit from assistance when they find themselves in this position.

The key to the work program the State offers is conditioning, training and re-thinking our values. I believe, in the words of Galileo Galilei, "You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself." In order to do that, they, (we) have to be given the tools we need for us to be successful.

The work program, along with Strategic Training Solutions, hand in hand did this for me.

The work program creates momentum. You can't steer a parked car. Someone who isn't doing anything isn't demonstrating initiative or commitment. Meanwhile the Strategic Training Solutions addresses the attitudes of the heart and mind and helps prepare the individual to succeed where they may be more inclined to fail.

It is my personal belief that, to ensure our children a chance at survival, it is necessary, imperative that a law be passed mandating that in order to receive any benefits from the State, you must participate.

For me, it's very simple. You can live or you can just exist.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Valerie Cahill