



## **House Committee on Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Testimony in Opposition to HB 2353**

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Presented by:

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Executive Director

NAMI Kansas is the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots organization whose members are individuals living with mental illnesses and their family members who provide care and support. NAMI Kansas provides programs of peer support and education by and for our members through a statewide network of 13 local affiliates. We advocate for individuals who are living with mental illness to ensure their access to treatment and supportive services.

As written, NAMI Kansas opposes HB 2353. NAMI Kansas strongly supported the Kansas Employment First law, which this Committee wrote and got passed into law back in 2011. As HB 2353 is currently written, it clearly goes against the policy in this Committee's groundbreaking Employment First law. This Committee, and the Kansas Legislature was the first state in the nation to pass an Employment First law. In fact, as written, HB 2353 takes a radical turn against this law and the clear national consensus supporting and prioritizing competitive integrated employment.

HB 2353 would for the first time in the history of the state use law place specific language into the law (KSA 75-3317) endorsing paying people with disabilities less than minimum wages in segregated settings. This is bad policy and completely unnecessary. One could argue that the current use law vendors have done quite well with the current law, which makes no mention of paying less than minimum wages to people with disabilities. You may have seen the damning media exposes conducted by numerous media outlets about many supposed nonprofits who pay their CEOs hundreds of thousands of dollars a year while they pay people with

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disabilities mere pennies an hour. It is shameful. Because this committee was the guiding force behind the current Employment First law, which places a priority on paying at least minimum wage to people with disabilities, and in fact that law calls for competitive wages in integrated settings, we would ask this same Committee to delete all of lines 26 through 28 on page 1. This is the offensive and completely unnecessary language regarding subminimum wage (also known as "14c" certificates).

If lines 26 through 28 were deleted, then we would switch from an opponent to a proponent on HB 2353.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

I would stand for questions at the appropriate time.