



Senate Committee on Assessment & Taxation

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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.

Because SB 211 uses taxpayer dollars to provide a blanket 15% tax credit to anyone who purchases any goods or services from two “certified businesses” and use law vendors, we are concerned that the “certified business” law must be changed so it does not discriminate against people with mental illness.

On March 14th, we offered testimony to the House Committee on Commerce, Labor & Economic Development regarding HB 2356 which indicates that the bidder’s preference program is unnecessarily restricted to individuals only with a severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Deleting this language would make the program applicable to individuals who face a significant barrier to employment based on criteria for having any mental illness or disability which qualifies one for social security disability. Our testimony stated that the existing language in the bill discriminates unfairly against this broader population of individuals who are affected by mental illness. Moreover, because adults over the age of 21 with mental illness are not covered by any HCBS waiver program, the current language excludes an important target population of adults with a serious mental illness who face employment challenges. We also testified that language should be added to HB 2356 to clarify competitive employment regarding use law vendors. We stated that our support for HB 2356 was subject to these changes being made.

SB 211 provides a substantial benefit to certified businesses. This benefit requires that the underlying program be changed to ensure that ALL people with disabilities, including those with mental illness, have an incentive to be hired by a certified business. Without this change, the bill is

clearly discriminatory and uses tax payer dollars to perpetuate this discrimination. We cannot reward bad behavior by allowing this discrimination to continue.

Thank you for your consideration.