

Testimony in support of HB2416 with DRC Proposed Amendments

Hello. My name is Colin Olenick. I'm a self-advocate. I work at the Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas. When I was transitioning out of high school, I had to go to a sheltered workshop for work experience. The school district said it was because I used a wheelchair. They also told me that I would be paid less than minimum wage. I was very surprised and very angered by this. I had always learned that people had died fighting for a minimum wage. The sheltered workshop was very noisy. I wasn't able to get much work done. The work was very tedious and very boring. The work consisted of putting things into a bag. I was very depressed and I felt down. I had been mainstreamed in school all my life (I was always with my non-disabled peers).

When I was 16, still in high school, I got a job working in a movie theater. I took tickets at the front door. I loved that job because I was able to interact with people. I worked there for 16 years! I felt included and part of the team. I wondered why the school district couldn't just focus on my success with the job at the movie theater. No one should have to work in a sheltered workshop for very little pay. Being paid at minimum wage or above allows me to contribute to the economy, pay taxes and realize the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sub-minimum wage contradicts all that Disability Policy has done for the last 30 years. The bill before you with the proposed amendments would be a needed step towards aligning social welfare policy with social justice. Thank you for your time.