



**House Commerce Committee Testimony**  
**HB 2625**  
**February 20, 2020**  
**Envision – Michael Monteferrante, CEO**

Chairman Tarwater and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony for HB 2625. Envision is a Wichita-based company that employs more than 350 people, most of whom are blind or visually impaired. We offer comprehensive, multidisciplinary services tailored to individuals with vision impairments and help them with the tools and training necessary to achieve independence despite their sight limitations.

There's an unacceptably high unemployment rate for those who are blind or visually impaired. Many whom we serve have been told at various times in their lives that work wasn't an option for them; that their vision impairments would impede their opportunities to contribute to the common good through a job.

At our manufacturing site and workforce innovation center, the blind and visually impaired have employment opportunities. We're empowering folks with training and tools to earn their own wage. The work many are doing at Envision is manufacturing plastic bags. In fact, Envision employees produce more than \$3 million plastic bags a day and supply 65 percent of the United States military global use of plastic bags. We also supply bags to USD 259 public schools and many local charities which sell them as fundraisers.

The money generated from Envision's manufacture of plastic bags is used to provide numerous vision rehabilitation programs and services to people across the state, regardless of their ability to pay. If it weren't for Envision, Kansans wouldn't have access to these services as the state isn't funding this work, nor are we receiving significant resources from other government entities that typically aid vulnerable populations. We're a privately owned business that's been assisting blind and low-vision Kansans since 1933. The manufacture of plastic bags in Wichita, Kansas, is critical to our bottom line and ability to continue to provide services and training to the visually impaired.

The bill before you today would preempt cities and counties from prohibiting or regulating paper or plastic carryout bags and other single-use plastic items. We want to continue to provide men and women with vision impairments an opportunity to work. The quality of life for Kansas' most vulnerable citizens – represented by Envision's employees and clients – is too important to jeopardize with inconsistent city-by-city laws that are not good for consumers or businesses.

We appreciate the legislature adopting a common sense approach to this issue and stand in support of HB 2625.