

March 9, 2020

Testimony of:

Annette Caraway
Topeka, KS

Testimony on:

Senate Bill 230 – Clarifying the Authority of the KCDHH
March 11, 2020

Chair Huebert and Members of House Education Committee:

My name is Annette Caraway. I lost my hearing when I was 8 months old due to the cause of measles. I was told that I was hard-of-hearing, but my both hearings are still degrading from moderate to profound deaf. Moreover, in my early 20s years old, I've become a legally blind with Macular Degeneration and Stargardt diseases. Being legally blind was the most devastated and depressing I have ever experienced. As young and independence I was, my dream shattered, and I lost my confidence at that time. So, I've needed to rely someone. Not only relying on my low vision aides and ASL interpreter may always be enough but I need more to access to communicate outside world such as, for example, airport station, restaurants, conferences and meetings, retreats and etc.

I am currently full-time State employee for over 20 years. Nearly every day, I have faced some barriers, some obstacles; I don't always get an equal access like other privilege do but I don't let them stop me; just that I have to do more efforts to get where I need to and desire to do. When I don't get the equal access, I get isolated, left being hindered, uninformed in social world, including employment.

My mother have 16 children and half of us are legally blind and most of us live in Topeka. One of my nieces is deaf and the other is also legally blind and other with disabilities. I am only one have dual disabilities, deaf and legally blind.

Under communication access services, Services Support Provider (SSP) would be greatly beneficial for me, not only for me but other deaf/blind and with other disabilities, especially with young people. I wish I had SSP when I was younger.

Please do not feel sorry for me. I don't want your pity. I have met some people who said they felt sorry for me but couldn't help me. Instead, please vote to pass this SB 230 bill. You would have made a huge difference in our daily lives and mine.

Thank you for your time for listening my testimony.

Annette Caraway