



March 12, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Mark Eaton, Chief Financial Officer for Envision, Inc. On behalf of Envision and the thousands of blind or visually impaired citizens that are served and or employed by Envision, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of H.B. 2727, AN ACT concerning sales taxation; relating to exemptions; requirements of new exemptions; exemption for Envision, Inc. and friends of hospice of Jefferson county; imposing sales tax on certain services.

Out of respect for the Committee's time, I will not take a great deal of time introducing you to Envision. However, I do think it is important that you understand a little about who we are and what we do. Envision is a not for profit 501 (c)3 based in Wichita, Kansas. We provide three primary services and functions for people who are blind and visually impaired.

1. Employment in both blue collar and white collar jobs for hundreds of people who are blind and visually impaired which creates a sense of purpose and meaning. 70% of people who are blind or visually impaired are unemployed. All Envision employees participate in the same healthcare and 401(k) plans as well as pay Kansas State income taxes.
2. Programs and services for people who are blind and visually impaired ranging from day care for preschool children to living skills for senior citizens who have lost vision due to macular degeneration or glaucoma.
3. Cutting edge research into developing technology to assist people who are blind or visually impaired with navigating employment and life through things such as way finding, maximizing peripheral vision, retaining driving skills in rural areas.

It is important that the Committee understands that many of the services provided by Envision used to be provided by the state. The state of Kansas' investment in services for the blind and visually impaired has been greatly reduced over the last decade with Envision stepping in to fill the gap. In fact, we received information from Kansas Legislative Research that shows the state was spending \$10 million a year on services for the blind just a decade ago. A year ago, the state spent just \$200,000. To be clear, we not offering that information as criticism to you as policymakers or the state in general. Envision, as a specialized not for profit, believes that we are better equipped to provide these services, and Envision spends a net cash loss of approximately \$3 million per year providing services and programs to Kansas citizens who are blind or visually impaired. However, it is hard to understand why Envision is still required to pay sales tax into the state when we buy products and certain services to treat, care for and employ Kansas' blind and visually impaired citizens. After all, our stepping into the void is saving taxpayers millions of dollars every year.



By way of example, we recently purchased hardware and software that enables blind individuals to use something you use every day. Something you probably take for granted and something you likely would have a hard time functioning without. The Internet. The hardware and software cost Envision \$150,000. And then we paid another \$10,000 to the state in sales tax. \$10,000 to the state of Kansas so blind people can use hardware and software to use the Internet.

H.B. 2727 would fix what I and surely most citizens believe is an inequity in the states tax system. It would exempt Envision, Inc. from paying sales tax when it purchases items in our efforts to assist Kansas' who are blind and visually impaired. We believe its common sense public policy and I hope you do to. With that I ask the Committee to report H.B. 2727 favorable for passage.

I would like to introduce you to my co-worker, Teresa Houston, who is blind and runs the Envision Childhood Development and Learning Center.

(Note: Teresa will speak briefly about her employment in a white collar job as well as the program she runs for pre-school children who are blind or visually impaired.)

Thank you and I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark D. Eaton", is written over a horizontal line.

Mark D. Eaton
Chief Financial Officer
Envision, Inc.