



INDEPENDENCE
INCLUSION
INNOVATION

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TO: Senator Julia Lynn, Chair and
Members of the Senate Commerce Committee

FR: Matt Fletcher, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: SB 26

Chairperson Lynn, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 26, which will expand employment opportunities for Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The membership of InterHab has long identified the promotion of employment efforts as a priority, and has been a leader in Kansas in the development of a full spectrum of employment supports for persons with I/DD in order to assist them in becoming more independent and productive members of their communities.

Kansas is blessed to have a low unemployment rate of around 3%, which means that most businesses are challenged with attracting quality workers. Given these workforce shortages, employers need to utilize every possible pool to overcome these challenges.

In spite of this, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities remain largely excluded from the workforce, with some national estimates placing this population at nearly 80% unemployment. This is unfortunate, because individuals with developmental disabilities are willing and able to work. They are the quality workers that many businesses are searching for.

However, employers have often underutilized the persons with I/DD as a qualified pool of employees due to fear of liability as well as concerns regarding accessibility and productivity issues. And sometimes it's been due to an ignorance of the abilities of this population.

SB 26 seeks to break down such barriers by allowing businesses to work in partnership with I/DD community service providers in addressing liability-related concerns, removing accessibility or productivity barriers, and removing outdated schools of thought that unnecessarily limit the participation of persons with I/DD in the workforce. Most importantly, SB 26 will create greater choices and options for individuals with I/DD in becoming independent, productive members of their communities. That's an outcome we can all be supportive of.

We respectfully ask your support of SB 26.