



February 16, 2021

TO: Sen. Renee Erickson and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee

FR: Nick Wood, Associate Director, InterHab

RE: HB 2219

Chair Erickson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2044, 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 IDD in order to assist them in becoming more independent and productive members of their communities.

Despite many years of advocacy, persons with disabilities remain largely excluded from the workforce. Some national estimates are as high as 80% unemployment for people with IDD. This is unfortunate because individuals' disabilities are willing and able to work. However, there are three basic reasons that employers themselves have identified as barriers that keep them from hiring more people with disabilities:

- A lack of understanding of the scope of the talent available;
- A lack of understanding of the potential benefits; and
- Misconceptions about the cost versus the ROI of disability inclusion.

While working with employment support service providers, Kansas employers will be helping to dispel the myths about employing people with disabilities. The truth is there are many direct and indirect benefits for businesses:

- Improved productivity in work environments that are more inclusive of persons with disabilities
- Enhanced community reputation
- Positive impact that from having a workforce that is more representative of the public at large

HB 2219 will create greater choices and options for individuals with IDD in becoming independent, productive members of their communities. It will encourage more employers to get interested in employing people with disabilities and provide incentives to make the hire. That will be a very good step forward.

We respectfully ask your support of HB 2219.