



April 20th, 2022

TO: Representative Brenda Landwehr and
Members of the Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight

FR: Matt Fletcher, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: Strategic Direction for IDD Services

Chair Landwehr and members of the committee, **thank you very much** for the significant efforts of the Kansas Legislature this session to prioritize the needs of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Kansas IDD service system will take a big step forward in recovering from two decades of underfunding thanks to the Legislature's work this session. This assistance couldn't have come at a better time, as IDD service providers are struggling with historic numbers of vacant workforce positions.

We now need to take an important next step on behalf of the IDD service system. It's time to invest energy in developing a strategic direction for the future of services for Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Last Year's Special Committee on the IDD HCBS Waiver Delved into the Causes of Significant, Ongoing IDD Issues

The hearings last October provided an excellent opportunity to examine long-standing challenges facing the community IDD provider network, such as the erosion of service capacity and the waiting list. Advocates, providers and the State all provided context for these issues, which were allowed to form due to a lack of strategic vision and adequate funding over multiple decades.

InterHab shared in its report to the Special Committee that a lack of strategic vision has plagued the IDD system since the mid-1990's. In 1995, the Kansas Developmental Disabilities Reform Act (KSA 39-1801 et seq.) was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Bill Graves. This law was – and continues to be – a landmark measure that seeks to develop a strong network of community-based supports for persons with IDD. Chief among the many positive tenets of the DD Reform Act is its establishment of outcomes for the network: *Independence, Inclusion, Integration, and Productivity*. Further, the statute calls for the development of *“adequate and reasonable funding”* for this IDD network. Unfortunately, since its passage 26 years ago, the promise of the Kansas DD Reform Act remains largely unfulfilled.

As the state approached the 21st century, the challenges facing the IDD provider network fell to the periphery of policy considerations. Since passage of the Kansas DD Reform Act, no strategic vision has been specifically developed for this system, and larger efforts, such as KanCare, have fallen short of their promised outcomes for the IDD population. In addition to a lack of strategic vision, chronic underfunding has seriously undermined the ability of IDD service providers to maintain service capacity via an adequate direct care workforce.

Taskforce Approach Creates an Exciting Path Forward

Several recommendations put forth by conferees during the hearings last October were ultimately championed by the Special Committee. Chief among the recommendations is the formation of a special legislative taskforce to further examine issues impacting the IDD system. Such a taskforce could serve as an excellent opportunity to combine legislative, administrative and community expertise to craft long term policy solutions. We look forward to providing input on how this taskforce could be assembled to provide maximum beneficial outcomes.

In addition to the taskforce concept, the Special Committee also provided several other important recommendations, such as the exploration of service alternatives such as a children's waiver and community support waiver concepts and examination of potential methods to provide ongoing funding adjustments to the IDD system in the future. We look forward to the formation of a special taskforce to examine those recommendations and look forward to working with the legislature to help the taskforce become a reality later this year.

We Appreciate the Legislature's Continued Support of the IDD Service System

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Kansas Legislature this session to address long-standing funding shortages within the IDD service system. Your work has enabled us to begin the process of setting a strategic direction for these valuable services for the first time in a generation. The membership of InterHab looks forward to collaborating with you and your legislative peers in this highly important work.