



Testimony of Buddy Sell
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Envision

Before the Kansas House
Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee
Hearing on House Bill 2275, the Disability Employment Act

February 9, 2023

Chairman Tarwater and Members of the Kansas House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development:

Good afternoon! My name is Buddy Sell, Senior Vice President of Operations with Envision. While I'm providing testimony on behalf of Envision, I also serve as Chair of the Kansas State Use Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to convey Envision's strong support for House Bill 2275, which will absolutely help Envision provide more employment and much needed services to Kansans who are blind or visually impaired. Envision is one of the largest employers of people who are blind in the United States. We are currently in the final stages of negotiations with a large Kansas manufacturer. If we are able to reasonably reassure this manufacturer that this bill will not sunset at the end of calendar year 2023, we will immediately receive our first subcontract award that will provide new employment opportunities for several years to come for Kansans who are blind. Envision will also be making a large capital investment for a new piece of manufacturing equipment to demonstrate and support our commitment to this long-term relationship.

The proposed policy modifications in HB 2275 make it much easier for us to attract new and significant win-win subcontract opportunities. The Covid pandemic had a substantial impact on our agency and affected commercial manufacturing throughout the state of Kansas, so we were unable to strategically utilize the existing tax credit statute to create new long-term employment opportunities. Once pandemic concerns eased and we were able to mobilize resources, we became aware of the manufacturer's (valid) concern about the short amount of time left remaining in the current statute. The reauthorization and improvement of the program in HB 2275 provides significant opportunities for Kansas manufacturers to work with qualified agencies, and genuinely support real employment opportunities for people who are blind (or have other significant disabilities). I've been with Envision for over 23 years, and I'm very proud to say that this piece of state legislation truly helps "level the playing field" for a large segment of Kansans that have been historically and significantly under-employed. These current and future employees are honestly extremely eager to contribute to society and to share with their friends and loved ones that they are (also) working.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony at this hearing. Envision and I look forward to continuing to work with the Kansas Legislature to improve the quality of life and provide inspiration and opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired through employment, outreach, rehabilitation, education, and research.