



*Serving individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities in
Clay, Geary, Pottawatomie, and Riley counties in Kansas.*

TO: Representative Nick Hoheisel, Chair
Members of House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee

FROM: Lori B. Feldkamp, Big Lakes President & CEO

DATE: February 15, 2023

RE: HB2272 – KPERS Retirement Exemption for IDD Services

My name is Lori Feldkamp and I am the President and CEO of Big Lakes Developmental Center, Inc. For 50 years, Big Lakes has provided services for individuals with I/DD that enable them to live and work in their home communities in Riley, Geary, Pottawatomie and Clay counties. Big Lakes' mission is to deliver quality services that promote choice, independence and inclusion for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the challenges we face in recruiting qualified employees.

I/DD KPERS eligible providers around the state are faced with extreme difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified employees. There is no single solution to this problem. However, **HB2272 is one small regulatory change that can help us in our recruitment efforts** by allowing us to recruit retired employees and recruit other qualified KPERS retirees. For example, individuals exiting the school system; such as para educators and special education teachers who are ready to stop teaching but not yet ready to stop working. This kind of experience would be extremely valuable for the people we serve.

At the present time, **the cost of hiring KPERS retirees is cost prohibitive** for Big Lakes. While the hired KPERS retiree would contribute nothing to KPERS after retirement, the rate for employers, like Big Lakes, **increases from 8.43% to 30% once the individual reaches \$25,000 in income.**

Based on our recruitment experience the past couple years, I estimate HB2272 would enable us to hire 3-4 more individuals each year. This is not a large number but it would be helpful when faced with 26 open positions, which is our current situation. Your support of this bill would be greatly appreciated by I/DD providers and individuals in services around the state.

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