



**Kansas House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
Testimony in Support of HB 2310 - Kansas C.A.R.E.S. Act**

February 11th, 2025

Chairman Tarwater and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2310. We are grateful for your leadership, Mr. Chairman, as well as Representative Williams' dedication to the disability community in Kansas by introducing this vital bill to enhance the essential disability workforce in Kansas. KCDD's mission is to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families to lead systems change, build capacity, and advocate for inclusive, integrated, accessible communities where everyone belongs and thrives throughout our state. Our council is made up of self-advocates, family members, state agencies, and other partners from across the state.

KCDD strongly encourages the Committee to support the Kansas C.A.R.E.S. Act (*Career Advancement, Resources, Employment and Supports for the disability workforce*) to invest in one of the largest workforces in Kansas, professionals who serve Kansans with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). The bill provides evidenced-based best practices and offers state solutions to **recruit, retain, and reward** front line workers, such as Direct Support Workers (DSWs). The impetus for this bill stems from our KCDD's IDD Health Coalition, which includes consists of over 60 organizations, self-advocates, and caregivers, collaborated to take action and develop solutions to address the disability workforce crisis, as well as recommendations from important state investments by the Legislature & Kansas taxpayers, such as:

- 1) [2024 KU Waitlist Study](#);
- 2) Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) two-year DSW Career Ladder Study ([contract awarded by KDADS to KU in 2024](#)); and
- 3) [Training Module Development](#) with the KU School of Social Welfare.

Specifically, this bill includes several key provisions:

- Development and support of career education programs by the Kansas Dept for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), Kansas State Dept of Education and the Midwestern higher education compact in Kansas that inform high school and community college students about careers as direct support professionals and community or technical college programs that prepare students for such careers. ([Recommendation from Maryland DSW Shortage Think Tank](#))
- Require KDADS to adopt the [e-badge academy program](#) which is part of the national alliance for direct support professionals (NADSP) or a substantially similar career development and

professional certification program for applicable department employees and contractors by December 31, 2025. ***(Recommendation from KU DSW Study)***

- Allow DSWs and community mental health centers access to enroll in the Kansas state healthcare plan as a way to build our DSW career ladder in Kansas (Note: under [K.S.A. 75-6506](#), Community Developmental Disability Organizations (CDDO) employees are already eligible take advantage of KPERS so expand this to DSPs and PCAs). Access to benefits is a large barrier to keeping employees into the profession. ***(Recommendation from KU DSW Study and law [passed in Rhode Island](#))***
- Require KDADS to [implement Independent Budget Authority \(IBA\)](#), allowing waiver participants to take responsibility for managing all aspects of service delivery in the supports and services planning process. ***(Recommendation from KU IDD Waitlist Study)***
- Advise the Kansas Secretary of Administration to work with KDADS to create a performance-based contract program, including goals of service utilization, a decrease in hospitalization and emergency room use, and completion of specified advanced training by one or more disability service workers employed by the contractor. This program will set quality standards for managed care organizations and other contractors. A portion of state payments will be withheld and released only when these quality standards are met. ***(Recommendation from KU DSW Study)***
- In Kansas, there are significant differences in rates across all state waivers, typically the IDD waiver having the lowest rates. By achieving rate parity across all state waiver programs administered by KDADS, DSW's and providers would be equally rewarded for their services across populations. KDADS would be required that an increase in the rate for one waiver program is matched with an equivalent increase in rates in all other waiver programs. ***(Recommendation from KDADS)***

As you all know, Kansans with IDD, and their families, have been struggling for over two decades to find DSWs – essential workers who provide critical and necessary services, such as in-home care, daily living support, and community participation. This is not unique to Kansas, however, requires states to advance a state solution to address this crisis. *We feel strongly this bill does just that.*

The pandemic only exacerbated the shortage leaving many families without options and caregivers were forced to leave their jobs to step into this role. A KU School of Social Welfare survey found that “during the pandemic, 25.6% of self-directed consumers and 60% of agency-based consumers did not have backup care plans to replace absent DSWs.”

In Kansas, approximately 25,830 Direct Support Workers (DSWs) provide care across various populations, including older adults, individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and physical disabilities (PD). With a turnover rate of 50% and a projected 17% increase in demand, the need for a stable and growing workforce is more critical than ever. Additionally, a quarter of Kansan DSWs who work in homecare are uninsured—about twice the national rate of uninsurance for working-age adults. Many DSWs leave this occupation to pursue degrees in nursing or

other healthcare professions that pay more, offer health insurance, retirement, and the opportunity to advance within the line of work.

Thank you to the committee for your consideration.

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Other data points to consider:

- Median wage for a DSW is \$13.43
- The KU School of Social Welfare predicts 50,000 Home Health Aides and Personal Care Attendants Job Openings by 2032
- 45% of DSWs in Kansas rely on public assistance and 38% are in low income households
- States with investments in their DSWs:
 - Virginia: Paid sick leave for home health workers., including self-directed workers.
 - Wisconsin: Statewide DSW recruitment & retention program.
 - Tennessee: Bonuses for NADSP-certified DSWs.
 - Minnesota: Pay raises for trained DSWs.
 - Missouri: Higher wages & Medicaid expansion aid DSWs.