



EQUALITY ♦ LAW ♦ JUSTICE

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**House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development
Proponent Testimony for HB2310**

Chairman Tarwater and members of the committee:

My name is Mike Burgess. I am the Director of Policy & Outreach at the Disability Rights Center of Kansas (DRC). DRC is a public interest legal advocacy organization that is part of a national network of federally mandated organizations empowered to advocate for Kansans with disabilities. DRC is officially designated by the State of Kansas as Kansas' protection and advocacy system. DRC is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, organizationally independent of state government and whose focus is the protection and enhancement of the rights of Kansans with disabilities.

DRC is excited to be here today to support the Kansas CARES Act. We very much support the concepts included in this bill. In the interest of time, I just wanted to highlight a few of those items:

- Career ladder for direct support workers and direct support professionals.
- Maintaining a registry to make it easier to individuals to find workers and for workers to find clients to care for
- Creating a waitlist portal so individuals and their families can see their status, know where they are on the waitlist, verify contact info and service needs, and record/update their communication preferences that should include options for email and text messages.

There have been several recurring barriers to growing the ranks of individuals who provide care for Kansans with disabilities. Access to healthcare insurance has been a common item that comes up often. We like the idea of extending access to the state healthcare plan to direct support workers. It appears that one group of workers may not be able to access this benefit as the bill is drafted, but it looks like a small technical amendment could give them access.

Adding the sentence in bold (or something similar) would help individuals who self-direct their services to also be able to access the healthcare insurance benefit.

"Disability services provider" means a public or private agency or organization or a subdivision or subunit of such agency or organization that is a developmental or intellectual disability services provider that provides one or more health, supportive, attendant care or other disability services, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by the secretary, for a fee by direct support professionals or personal care attendants for individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities. **A disability service provider shall also include a person who is authorized to self-direct services, whereby they engage direct support professionals in the provision of such services.**

Language should also exclude individuals who self-direct their care from the 70% participation requirement (included on page 8 of the bill) as many folks typically only employ 1-3 staff which would make it impossible for their workers to participate unless all of them did.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for HB2310. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.