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Wednesday, August 02, 2023

**Chair Sen. Beverly Gossage**

**Honorable Chair and Distinguished Members of the 2023 Special Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disability Waiver,**

My name is Rachel Neumann. I am the Chief Operating Officer of COF Training Services, a Community Service Provider supporting 300+ individuals across East Central Kansas. I have worked in the field for 10 years and have had the opportunity to work through two extreme ends of funding into the system. Prior to 2020, I worked through the challenges of critical budget cuts, decline in quality of services across the state, and trying to support individuals in finding service providers while most providers had their doors closed for new services. Over the past two years, I have been honored to work through a time where Kansas Legislators have invested in restoring the system with increased funding and resources. Having experienced both sides of the spectrum, I can express genuine gratitude for the investment over the past two years. I can also speak to the fear of working in a high level position in a field that has a history of decades of inadequate funding. My hope is that after today's testimony's, you will find evidence of the need for long term commitment to maintaining and building the capacity of the IDD system.

These recent, significant rate investments in the system combined with the development of this special committee reflects the commitment of Kansas Legislature to understand and address the workforce and capacity crisis which threatens the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). While recent investments have helped significantly in restoring stability in a system that was on the brink of collapse, we must be attentive to what led us to that point. From the year 2000-2019 (almost two decades) inflationary expenses increased by 57% while IDD

rates only increased by 22%. During each increase in inflation, the cost to run a CSP business grew while the reimbursement rate did not grow enough to allow providers to address their increased costs. This forced providers to reduce budget and cut costs to preserve the best quality of care possible without financially draining the agency. Over the years, budgets were whittled down and priorities were readjusted to a dangerous point. In the business of caring for human lives things like safe vehicles, buildings and homes that are maintained, quality assurance systems, and healthy food are almost as important as qualified caregivers. The aforementioned items are things that were often sacrificed to keep businesses afloat and keep direct care workers employed.

As we continue to restore capacity to this system, it is critical that we pay mind to everything that goes into building a strong IDD program. While the system must be built on the foundation of competent direct care workers, it takes more than that to build effective services. In order to ensure the continued stability of this life saving system, there must be a commitment to maintaining adequate funding. It is critical that the system is set up for success and is reassured of their future stability to maintain and build capacity across the state.

We ask that the legislator establish a rate adjustment system that regularly analyzes and adjusts the rates according to changes in inflation and regulatory expectations to ensure the continued success of IDD services in Kansas. This rate adjustment program will help ensure quality, comprehensive services as well as sufficient wages and compensation packages for professionals supporting people with IDD.

Thank you for your consideration.



*Rachel Neumann*

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