



INDEPENDENCE
INCLUSION
INNOVATION

January 26, 2012

TO: Marc Rhodes, Chair, and
Members, House Appropriations Committee

FR: Matt Fletcher, Associate Director
InterHab

RE: HB 2442 and employment opportunities for Kansans with Developmental
Disabilities

Chairman Rhodes and members of the Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of House Bill 2442. The member organizations of InterHab have, for many years, invested a great deal of time, talent, energy and creativity in creating employment opportunities for Kansans with developmental disabilities. Our members were among pioneers across the country that sought to break down barriers to employment by designing programs and supports that would introduce persons with developmental disabilities to employers, and develop lasting relationships built upon the acknowledged sense of purpose that work gives an individual. As a result, opportunities for engaging in work are more plentiful than ever before in history of this population.

In spite of these efforts, employment rates for persons with developmental disabilities lag far behind any other demographic, and much more progress will need to occur before persons with developmental disabilities will have the same array of employment possibilities available to them as the general population, or even other disability populations. Our members will continue to push back barriers, and come up with innovative new concepts to further employment opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities. As such, the members of InterHab express support for the initiatives contained within HB 2442.

HB 2442 seeks to create incentives for businesses in employing persons with developmental disabilities; this creates a "win-win" opportunity for Kansas businesses and persons with developmental disabilities, and provides an opportunity for employers to reap double the rewards for employing this population. We consider it double the rewards for employers because, long after the fiscal incentives for participating in this effort have been realized, employers will still continue to reap the multitude of benefits from these dedicated, loyal and hard-working employees.

The membership of InterHab does however urge caution in over-anticipation of dramatic changes in the long-term support needs of persons with developmental disabilities who engage in work activities. There has been mention of initiatives, such as those contained within HB 2442, as being "off ramps" from the Medicaid-based long-term care that many persons with developmental disabilities rely upon. While some may indeed achieve a level of self-sufficiency in which they no longer need these supports, many with developmental disabilities who engage in work activities will continue to need support for the rest of their lives.

We would also encourage the Committee to view the initiatives contained within HB 2442 as one part of a wide spectrum of work opportunities that are made available to persons with developmental disabilities in an effort to meet each individual at the level of ability they currently are at, and help them grow as much as possible in this regard. Other valuable work activities, to name a few, include volunteerism, supervised work settings and self-employment/entrepreneurialism. All of these types of work opportunities hold value for persons with developmental disabilities in learning job skills, and should be fostered and promoted in addition to the initiatives contained in HB 2442.

The membership of InterHab is pleased to see that improving employment outcomes for persons with developmental disabilities is a priority for the Administration as well as the Legislature. We stand ready to work with all who wish to expand the horizon of opportunity for these Kansans.