



Department of Social and
Rehabilitation Services

Senate Ways and Means
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Support for SB 444

Presented by:

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Chairwoman McGinn and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to express the support of SRS for Senate Bill 444. I am Michael Donnelly, Director of Kansas Rehabilitation Services, the state's vocational rehabilitation program. Our purpose is to assist individuals with disabilities to maximize employment in competitive integrated employment, increase independence, integrate in their communities, and achieve self-sufficiency.

As you may know, Americans with disabilities experience an unemployment rate of roughly 70%. Of the 30% who are employed only a percentage are employed full-time with health insurance or other medical benefits through their employers. The mission of SRS is to support and promote self-sufficiency for all Kansans and that includes Kansans who have disabilities.

As the director of vocational rehabilitation for the state, I know firsthand the struggles people with disabilities endure to locate, obtain, and maintain employment in the general labor force. Senate Bill 444 provides one more avenue by which Kansans with disabilities are encouraged to pursue full-time competitive employment and not fear permanent loss of Medicaid or Home and Community Based (HCBS) waiver services. SB 444 provides an incentive to businesses and employers who are currently or wish to contract with the State of Kansas for goods and services if at least 20% of its full-time workforce is comprised of individuals with disabilities. The corporations must be domiciled in the state of Kansas and not operating under a sub minimum-wage certificate currently allowed by the U.S. Department of Labor under subsection (c) of 29 U.S.C. § 214. SB 444 requires that a qualified business (as defined by the Bill) offer to cover at least 70% of the cost of a private health insurance premium to its employees that equal or exceeds the state health insurance policy for its own employees. Additionally, if an individual is unable to maintain employment, SB 444 provides an automatic reinstatement to the HCBS or other Medicaid services the individual with disabilities was eligible for prior to leaving the system as a result of going to work full-time for a qualified business. This provision is an important incentive to help people with disabilities become employed without the risk of losing a medical safety net.

SRS is excited by the continued focus and effort by this Legislature and Administration to assist Kansans with disabilities to become meaningfully employed by businesses and employers whose primary business and activities are in our great state. The many efforts that have been proposed and implemented will result in great dividends for our workers with disabilities and for the citizens of Kansas as individuals with disabilities increase their ability to be self-sufficient and reduce or eliminate their dependence on a variety of public assistance programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to support SB 444.