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April 1, 2017

Dear Chairperson Representative Johnson and Committee Members,

My name is James Quillen, Vice-President/COO at OCCK, Inc. OCCK is in its 47th year of operation. We provide a variety of services including employment to 3,000 people with disabilities annually. We provide services in a nine county area in north central Kansas.

While this bill incentivizes private businesses, it also incentivizes qualified vendors and not-for-profit agencies. By using the incentives in this bill, vendors will be paying workers at least minimum wage and will need to meet the definition of integrated employment as defined by the Kansas Employment First Initiative Act. In addition, qualified vendors will offer health insurance benefits that are currently offered to other employees. These incentives may encourage the move away from subminimum wage and sheltered work toward an opportunity for employment at a competitive wage with the same benefits as all other employees. This bill offers one of many opportunities that need to be available to a person to seek employment with a competitive wage.

OCCK supports House Bill 2416 as we believe that this bill could provide qualified vendors and other not-for-profit agencies with resources needed to begin to make a variety of employment options available to people with disabilities and encourage the move toward competitive, integrated employment.

The Interhab Employment Resource Network is a network of nearly 30 not-for-profit agencies from all across Kansas working to change employment systems for people with disabilities. This network strives to make an array of employment opportunities available to people with disabilities. The Network also supports House Bill 2416.

Employment is an important aspect of all of our lives. It increases self-esteem, gives us a sense of belonging to our community, and encourages independence.

I would respectfully ask for this committee's support in making one of many employment options available and support House Bill 2416.

Respectfully,

James Quillen
Vice-President/COO
OCCK, Inc.