



Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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Testimony on SB 74
Presented to the Senate Committee on Transportation
by
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The Topeka Independent Living Resource Center (TILRC) is a civil and human rights organization. Our mission is to advocate for justice, equality and essential services for a fully integrated and accessible society for all people with disabilities. TILRC has been providing cross-age, cross-disability advocacy and services for over 30 years to people with disabilities across the state of Kansas. TILRC appreciates the opportunity to provide cross-disability perspective on SB 74.

The Independent Living Movement is based on the principle that the obstacles to choice, freedom, dignity and community integration for people with disabilities are largely social constructs. Over-medicalization defines people by their disability, instead of treating people as full citizens, with the potential and the pre-disposition to live independent, fulfilling lives.

When statistical data from 2013 to 2015 leads researchers to conclude that “almost half the people who die at the hands of police have some kind of disability.” (<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/half-people-killed-police-suffer-mental-disability-report-n538371>), the question facing the independent living movement is “what is the social construct that is resulting in this kind of violence in the disability experience?”

SB 74 is an attempt to address this question in a balanced and self-actualizing way. By allowing people with disabilities to choose to self-identify through the registry, and by using the same standard applied to obtaining other reasonable accommodations, SB 74 seeks to provide law enforcement officers a resource in dealing with people who may require accommodations or intervention from professionals outside of the law enforcement field. TILRC’s particular concern is that people with cognitive disabilities, including Autism, have a method to be identified by law enforcement and other first responders in instances where expressive or receptive communication, or the ability to meet behavioral norms may be compromised. A concomitant concern is for the protection of privacy as much as possible so these same individuals cannot be easily identified by those who might prey upon them in some fashion. A permanent decal on the license tag is of concern because ne’er-do-wells and others that may prey on people regarded as vulnerable could be alerted. A removable “dangler” could meet the same purpose while better protecting privacy.

Our agency appreciates the efforts of Senator Billinger and staff to make SB 74 language consistent with other state and federal language. Thank you also to the members of the Senate Transportation Committee for your time and mindful attention.

Advocacy and services provided by and for people with disabilities.