

Testimony for Autism Bill **HB 2148** to
The Transportation Committee
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Good morning,

My name is Linda Heitzman-Powell. I have been working in the field of Autism for over 20 years providing training to service providers and autism intervention services to families. Over the years I have advocated for capacity building, well trained staff, increased service access and legislative reform. While progress has been made towards ensuring equal access over the years, there remains limited capacity in rural and underserved areas.

While the reasons for this lack of access are many, one of the primary reasons is lack of resources to assist with program development both in the form of monetary access for program start-up as well as access to technical support to assist businesses in rural or underserved areas with expertise designed to help start and implement intervention programs.

As a means to address the ability of Kansan's to access and build evidence-based autism services all across the state, Autism Hope for Families was founded in an effort to disseminate information about autism and to build the capacity of organizations to design, build and implement services around Kansas.

The current initiative, the Autism License Plate, would generate funds to support this mission. Funds generated by the sale of these license plates would provide seed money for organizations around Kansas to start to build Kansas capacity to meet the ever-growing needs of families and children impacted by autism. By having a centralized source of funding for capacity building, Autism Hope for Families can accept applications for seed money from agencies serving rural and underserved areas as they begin to implement autism services in areas local to families and children in need.

In addition, monies generated from the sale of these license plates would provide Autism Hope for Families the opportunity to provide technical assistance around the state, helping these agencies identified qualified, well-trained service providers, develop infrastructure, and work to ensure these agencies remain viable entities in local communities that are providing evidence-based practices/interventions to these families and children impacted by autism.

It is my belief that this initiative will provide a viable funding stream that does not rely on government funding to build the capacity of agencies in Kansas to address the needs of those who live in rural and underserved areas.

Please consider granting autism families this opportunity for statewide awareness, acceptance, support, and funding by supporting Autism Bill **HB 2148**. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda S. Heitzman-Powell