

## Testimony of Eileen Doran, Executive Director of TARC, Inc., in Support of SB 173

I offer this written testimony in support of SB 173 which proposes to increase rates for providers of services to individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. TARC was founded in 1954 by a group of committed family members who were determined to have the needs of their children met in this community. TARC remains today the largest provider of services to this population in Shawnee County and we are facing an imminent crisis in our work.

We have taken pride in the exceptional quality of the services we offer for over 63 years and today we face a staggering turnover rate and vacancy rate among our Direct Support Professionals. The work they are asked to perform is rewarding but extremely challenging. Each staff person hired in the position must complete an extensive orientation before they begin providing supports. This is to protect the health, safety and dignity of the Person Supported. We invest time in the training and the staff turnover takes its toll on the entire agency. We have lower than acceptable staff to Person Supported ratios and that puts vulnerable individuals in an even more vulnerable position. Today we have our Adult Services Director providing direct supports on a daily basis as we have been unable to fill so many vacant positions. Even for positions that pay a wage that is a “living wage” we still cannot compete with hospitals, nursing homes, and KNI for the staff needed to fill our skilled positions.

Our system of service delivery in Kansas has dramatically deteriorated over the past four years as a direct result of the increased administrative demands of KanCare and inefficiencies it has created *combined* with the failure of the state to invest in our system by providing for any rate increases over the past eight years. In the past three year period, we have had a **turnover rate of Direct Support Professionals of 187.5%** at TARC. This is despite the fact that we do pay a higher starting wage than other providers in Shawnee County and have provided raises each of the past four years. Even with the small increases, I cannot honestly say that our Direct Support Professionals are paid anything close to a living wage let alone fairly compensate them for the demanding and important work they perform.

We have been asked in the past two years to comply with additional unfunded federal mandates that call for our programs to provide for more individualized and community focused services. While we believe all of the persons we support should have their needs met in the most inclusive setting appropriate, these mandates have put yet an additional financial strain on all of us in this field.

This Committee has the ability to strengthen a system that has been dramatically weakened before it becomes completely broken. Thank you for your consideration.