

Testimony in opposition to HB2550

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to address you today. Kathy Lobb and I are here as representatives of the Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas – an organization made of, by and for self advocates across Kansas. My name is Stephanie Sanford and I am the Advocacy Coordinator for SACK.

We are here to discuss the funding request before you and ask that we take a much needed step back and consider what it does, but most importantly, what it doesn't do. The amount of requested funding is substantial and could be transformative in our system. However, without guidance on expenditures and outcomes, we are simply perpetuating the existing broken system.

Had self advocates been asked what they see as needed improvements to services, specific outcomes would have been identified and supported. For example, self advocates consistently identify their case manager as their best resource and support. It was self advocates that led the effort to carve out services to retain their case managers and kept IDD out of managed care for the first year. Case Managers must have a Bachelor's degree among other qualifications. Originally the degree requirement was seen as necessary as the work load is extensive and requires a high level of responsibility. That has only gotten more "true" in the past two decades, yet TCM reimbursement rates have remained stagnant. The state has already lost many excellent TCM providers and we will continue to lose more unless we address the issue of adequately funding these case managers who are the true advocates for Kansans with IDD. This bill does not address these rates which are State Plan funded.

Self advocates would also tell you that we value our personal care attendants. These are the people who help us get up in the morning, provide personal care services so we can remain in the community, and help us get to bed in the evening. But there is a serious shortage of personal care attendants. When you can make more money flipping burgers at McDonald's, it's hard to compete. Reimbursement rates for Personal Care Services need to be increased but nothing in this bill says how money will be spent.

Self advocates would also tell you that they want real jobs that pay real wages in the community. The system of supports and services for individuals with IDD needs to move forward, not remain unchanged. Directives from the federal government level require that IDD systems move toward integrated, inclusive settings and that federal dollars will no longer reimburse for sub-minimum wage work. Several other states have paved the way as self advocates in Alaska, Oregon, Vermont, Maryland, Nevada and Maine have all successfully advocated for the removal of sub-minimum wages in their states. Self advocates agree with these changes, however, the requested funding does nothing to move our system towards that goal.

Self advocates live these services every day. Our voices should be honored. It is our future you have in your hands.