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**Disability Rights Center of Kansas**  
214 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 100 ♦ Topeka, KS 66603  
Phone: 785.273.9661 ♦ Toll Free: 1.877.776.1541  
Toll Free TDD: 1.877.335.3725 ♦ Fax: 785-273-9414  
[www.drckansas.org](http://www.drckansas.org) [info@drckansas.org](mailto:info@drckansas.org)

**Proponent for HB 2219**  
**Senate Commerce Committee**  
**February 16, 2022**

**Chair Erickson and members of the committee:**

My name is Mike Burgess. I am the Director of Policy & Outreach at the Disability Rights Center of Kansas (DRC). DRC is a public interest legal advocacy organization that is part of a national network of federally mandated organizations empowered to advocate for Kansans with disabilities. DRC is officially designated by the State of Kansas as Kansas' protection and advocacy system. DRC is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, organizationally independent of state government and whose focus is the protection and enhancement of the rights of Kansans with disabilities.

I am here today to share our support for HB2219, the Kansas Targeted Employment Act.

DRC worked extensively with the House Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee, and representatives of COF and Interhab on this version of the Kansas Targeted Employment for Kansans with Disabilities Act, and we are happy to be here and support this work product.

The bill references the federal definition of competitive, integrated employment from federal law. The committee also included a few safeguards for the budget with the \$5 million cap.

The final language allows a "qualified business" to earn a tax credit equal to 50 percent of the wages paid, not to exceed \$7.50 per hour. This is an important piece as it does provides an incentive for the employer to pay a competitive wage and provides some opportunity for career development as the incentive does not create a wage ceiling of minimum wage.

Individuals with disabilities are typically the last hired and first fired during tough times. While this bill by itself is not going to solve this, it should make a meaningful impact on increasing competitive, integrated employment opportunities for Kansans with disabilities.

It will also compliment the new Supports and Training for Employing People Successfully (STEPS) program that started July 1, 2021 to help individuals with permanent disabilities (including individuals on the I/DD waiting list). It helps participants prepare for employment, increase independence, receive and maintain health care coverage, and provide on-going supports to help maintain employment. The one ingredient that is missing is an incentive for employers to create jobs for individuals with I/DD.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB2219. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.