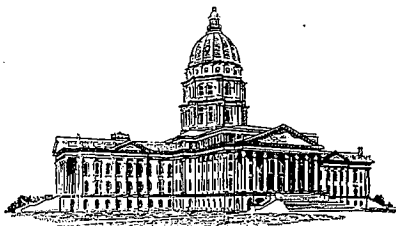


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FINANCIAL INSTITUTION & INSURANCE
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EDUCATION

Madam Chairman and members of the Senate Commerce Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today in support of Senate substitute for Senate Bill 195.

I am Dan Kerschen and I represent Senate District 26. I also serve as a commissioner on the Employment First Oversight Commission. I was appointed by the Speaker of the House when HB 2336 became law.

When HB 2336 first came to the House Commerce Committee there was widespread support for advancing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. However there were concerns about the makeup and duties of the commission which eventually contributed to the bill not advancing. The bill came back the next year and there were changes made to the commission again as well as discussion to remove the commission from the bill. Eventually the bill emerged from conference committee with the commission and was set up to be referred back to the Commerce Committee.

At that point I made the decision to support the bill even though I had serious reservations about the commission and its authority over state agencies. I felt it was more important to advance employment than to debate the intent of the commission.

Surely the commission could be flexible enough to accommodate legislative intent!

After nearly two years and two reports by the commission, we are doing exactly what most legislators did not want to do. The first report was resubmitted because of the adverse reaction by state agencies and others that it was too long and too focused on goals and objectives and on compliance with the commission.

This year's report that you should have received after January 14 is 75 pages long. The commission has put long hours and effort into this report and it is doing what the charge of commission states it should do. I believe we need to focus on employment and cooperation instead of compliance.

That is why we have proposed these changes to the commission. We need more commissioners with business and employment experience. We are changing the reporting to be an option and include members of the Senate and House Commerce Committees for face to face comments and evaluations of the progress.

I feel this interaction will generate support and motivate more participation by state agencies and businesses to implement employment first.

Thank you for your consideration.