



Rosie Cooper

KACIL Executive Director

Member Agencies:

Coalition for Independence

Kansas City, KS
913/321-5140 Voice/TT

Independent Living Resource Center

Wichita, KS
316/942-6300 Voice/TT

Independence, Inc.

Lawrence, KS
785/841-0333 Voice
785/841-1046 TT

Independent Connection/OCCK

Salina, KS
785/827-9383 Voice/TT

LINK, Inc.

Hays, KS
785/625-6942 Voice/TT

Prairie Independent Living Resource Center

Hutchinson, KS
620/663-3989 Voice

Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.

Osage City, KS
785/528-3105 Voice
785/528-3106 TT

Southeast Kansas Independent Living, Inc.

Parsons, KS
620/421-5502 Voice
620/421-6551 TT

The Whole Person, Inc.

Kansas City, MO
816/561-0304 Voice
816/627-2201 TT

Three Rivers ILC

Wamego, KS
785/456-9915 Voice

March 13, 2013

Senate Committee on Commerce

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

I am, Rosie Cooper, the Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living (KACIL). KACIL represents the following 10 Centers for Independent Living (CILS) in Kansas: Coalition for Independence of Kansas City, Independence Inc. of Lawrence, The Whole Person of Kansas City, Three Rivers Independent Living Resource Center of Wamego, Independent Connection of Salina, LINK, Inc. of Hays, Prairie Independent Living Resource Center of Hutchinson, Independent Living Resource Center of Wichita, Resource Center for Independent Living of Osage City, and Southeast Kansas Independent Living Center of Parsons. Centers provide services to people across all disabilities, all ages and all 105 counties. As mandated by the Rehabilitation Act, the majority of the people delivering those services must be like peers. During FY2012, 76% of the decision makers and 63% of other CIL staff at KACIL CILS were people with disabilities. We are Employment First.

CILS advocate for the rights of all people with disabilities to live in the communities of their choice and the right to be gainfully employed. Our work is often called grass roots advocacy and the Kansas Employment First Initiative is a product of such advocacy. Where Kansas Employment First is housed is not nearly as important to KACIL CILS as making sure it is a law that is worth much more than the paper it is written on. This law is about system change. It reads, "Making sure state programs, policies, procedures and funding support competitive and integrated employment of individuals with disabilities." That is systems change and it will take all of us to make sure it happens. Karl Dennis, one of the fathers of the Wraparound planning that is used in Kansas Mental Health Centers, said "true system change happens from the top down and bottom up. DCF/ Kansas Rehabilitation Services is a very good choice for that top lead agency; but please do not leave them there alone. Keep the bottom grass roots. It has to include people with physical, mental health, cognitive and traumatic brain injury disabilities. It has to include people in the community groups that support them like Centers for Independent Living. Last but not least it has to include the employers who hire them. Let that happen and this committee will hear success stories due to the Kansas Employment First Initiative that are a product of this law. Top down and bottom up—that's what we want.

