



Martha Gabehart, Executive Director

Laura Kelly., Governor

Proponent Testimony on HB 2253
Martha Gabehart, Executive Director
Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns

Thank you Chair Tarwater and committee members,

I am Martha Gabehart, Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns (KCDC). I am testifying in support of HB 2253 which establishes the Disability Hiring Preference for state civil service jobs, otherwise known as Kathy's Bill.

The State of Kansas passed the Employment First law in 2011. Employment First establishes the policy of providing Kansans with disabilities who apply for state programs that include an employment component to be offered competitive integrated employment as the first option before offering any other type of employment. Each year the Employment First Oversight Commission makes recommendations to the Governor, Legislature and state agencies about changes that need to be made to come into compliance with the Employment First policy. The Disability Hiring Preference has been recommended for many years in those documents. Passing this preference makes the State of Kansas a model employer of people with disabilities.

The Disability Hiring Preference will be a program that gives job applicants with disabilities who voluntarily apply for the preference an interview for State of Kansas civil service jobs for which they qualify and apply. The applicant must provide documentation of their disability as described on page 2, section c to the State of Kansas Office of Personnel Services.

The fact that the applicant has a disability is not disclosed to the interview team so there is no violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Kansas Act Against Discrimination.

An important component of the Disability Hiring Preference is that it prevents the person with a disability from being laid off first because of their disability. The employee with a disability is not required to have used the preference during the hiring process. But they must provide proof of disability prior to the announcement of the reduction in staff to take advantage of the protection from being laid off first. There are specific requirements the employee with the disability must meet in comparison to their fellow employees as outlined in sections e and f on page 2.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.