

January 26, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to express the Administration's support for HB 2442, an important piece of legislation my office help draft in support of the Governor's overall Medicaid reform proposal.

As you know, Governor Brownback tasked myself, along with the Secretaries of Health and Environment, Social and Rehabilitation Services, and Aging to develop a proposal to transform Medicaid to better serve those receiving benefits while making Medicaid sustainable in the long term. The subcabinet team and I traveled throughout Kansas holding public meetings that included legislators, consumers, providers, and advocates; hosted telephone town hall meetings; and solicited hundreds of ideas online, many of which were incorporated into the final KanCare package. We met with well over 2000 Kansans and communicated with countless others in telephone town halls and online communications.

In nearly every meeting, we heard from stakeholders that Medicaid consumers desperately want opportunities to work. Unfortunately, we also heard from stakeholders and learned through research about the roadblocks at every turn for potential employers and persons with disabilities that keep them out of the workforce. Roadblocks include employer stigma, financial incentives that discourage people from giving up Medicaid benefits, lack of understanding of disabilities, and a federal system that punishes people for going to work.

The Administration feels strongly the State of Kansas can and should do more to create opportunities for persons with disabilities. HB 2442 is an important component which will assist in the effort to create a market for Kansans with disabilities.

Study after study demonstrates that persons with disabilities who do work have improved outcomes and reduce costs to the Medicaid system. Both the state Working Health and WORK program have solid records of success for improving the outcomes and lives of Kansans with disabilities. In addition to the dollars and cents, we have met with many Kansans who have discussed the increased sense of dignity and respect inherent in work.

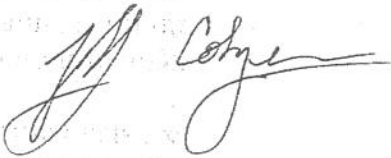
There is a range of persons with disabilities, there is a range of services they need, and there is a range of work opportunities appropriate for different Kansans. HB 2442 attempts to address a wide array of efforts to leverage purchasing dollars the state is already spending to employ persons with disabilities. Through the effort to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of Kansans with open ended contracting and the targeted focus to increase utilization of Use Law vendors, HB 2442 will have positive impacts on employment across Kansas.

There are many disincentives for persons with disabilities to go to work. One major disincentive this bill addresses is creating a path for quick return to services or reserving their "spot" on the waiting list if the work situation is not a good match for the consumer. This benefit will allow Kansans to make the transition into a job while knowing a safety net remains.

Waiting lists are an issue that has come before the Legislature many times over the years and remains a challenge today. Waiting lists can be reduced in two ways: by adding people to service rolls or by reducing the people who need for services. This bill would address waiting lists by reducing the number of people who need services. In the long term, reducing the need for services is a more sustainable path to reducing and eventually eliminating the need for waiting lists in Kansas.

Throughout its history, the State of Kansas has been a leader on many important national issues. It is the intention of the Brownback Administration to be a national leader in the effort to employ persons with disabilities. We look forward to your partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,



Jeff Colyer, MD
Lieutenant Governor