



Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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Testimony on SB 445 to Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
By Uriel Tarin
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I want to thank members of the committee for considering my testimony opposing Senate Bill 445. I am an Independent Living Advocate at Topeka Independent Living Resource Center (TILRC). "The Topeka Independent Living Resource Center is a civil and human rights organization." "Our mission is to advocate for justice, equality and essential services for a fully integrated and accessible society for all people with disabilities." TILRC is controlled and operated by a majority of persons with disabilities. TILRC provides advocacy and an array of self-directed services to persons with disabilities and links them to available community options. TILRC works with citizens who experience disabilities to advocate as a group for community change for equal rights and for additional services.

The Homestead Property Tax Refund Act", K.S.A. 2011 Supp. 79-4501, reads, "...The purpose of this act shall be to provide ad valorem tax refunds to: (a) Certain persons who are of qualifying age who own or rent their homestead; (b) certain persons who have a disability, who own or rent their homestead; and (c) certain persons other than persons included under the provisions of (a) or (b) who have low incomes and dependent children and own or rent their homestead..." Most persons with disabilities rent his or her residence. By striking "rent" from the definition of a homestead within the act, the act to (provide ad valorem tax refunds to... certain persons who have a disability) would no longer apply to the majority of persons with disabilities and puts even more pressure on the already over-stretched budgets of low income persons with disabilities.

The changes to Section 1(b) would preclude any eligible persons from receiving a tax refund based on this act. This is counter to the original purpose of the act and would have the greatest negative impact on those with the greatest need of assistance. Changing the tax refund to a tax credit would further lower the overall income of low income persons with disabilities. For example, under the proposed changes a person currently eligible for a refund under this act would lose the additional money given to them as a refund. Further, a person on SSI or SSDI would not see a refund based on the changes to this act because his or her income is not taxable so his or her liability would be zero.

In review, Senate Bill 445 is a bad idea. The result of the passage of this bill would further limit the ability of low income people with disabilities to live in the community. Persons with disabilities living on a fixed income already struggle to make ends meet with the costs of food, gas, and healthcare always rising. Passing this bill will make the struggle of living on a fixed income that much more difficult. I understand funding programs is a complicated process; however, burdening the already overburden is not the way.

Thank you again for considering my testimony opposing Senate Bill 445. I urge the committee members to vote "No".

Advocacy and services provided by and for people with disabilities.

Sn. Assmnt & Tax
3-14-12

Attachment # 5