



**Senate Public Health and Welfare
Wednesday, February 15, 2012
Rosa's Law**

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Tim Wood. I am the manager of the End the Wait Campaign. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today in support of SB 397, which is known nationally as "Rosa's Law". Rosa Mikulski is a 9 year old girl with an intellectual disability diagnosis from the State of Maryland whose family advocated on the federal and state levels to have the terms "mentally retarded" and "mental retardation" stricken from federal and state statute and instead use people first language such as "an individual with an intellectual disability" and/or "intellectual disability".

In its current form, SB 397 changes the definition of an intellectual disability, but with the amendments submitted by the Disability Rights Center of Kansas (DRC); this issue can be easily addressed. We are proposing that we not refer to people with an intellectual disability diagnosis as "the intellectually disabled", but instead be consistent with the use of people first language and use language such as "an individual with an intellectual disability" or "individuals with intellectual disabilities".

With the changes being proposed, SB 397 makes it the official policy of the State of Kansas to refer to individuals with intellectual disabilities with dignity and respect. Perhaps this is a small step in the grand scheme of things. There are still thousands of people with intellectual disabilities and their families who do not have the services they need, but this small step gives us all hope that our democratic system does in fact work and an individual can make a difference.

In his testimony before the US Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Rosa's brother Nick told the committee:

"What you call people is how you treat them. What you call my sister is how you will treat her. If you believe she's "retarded" it invites taunting, stigma. It invites bullying and it also invites slammed doors of being treated with respect and dignity."

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Funded through a generous grant of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

Madam Chair and members of this committee, I am grateful for your willingness to hold a hearing on this bill and move the State of Kansas in the direction of treating all Kansans with the dignity and respect we deserve.

I ask that you pass this piece of legislation, with the recommended amendments and make this the official policy of this State of Kansas.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak in support of SB 397.