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Chairwoman McGinn and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, my name is Pat Jonas, President & CEO, of the Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation of Kansas and I want to thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 444.

FINDINGS

- (1) Over three quarters of a billion dollars will be invested on Special Education in the State of Kansas this year to help young people with disabilities meet their maximum potential, yet the data samples from the Department of Education show that over the last 3-years only 25% of the students on average are competitively employed at one year, post graduation.
- (2) There are currently over 15,000 working age adults in Kansas State waiver programs and an additional 7,300 on the Developmental Disability and Physical Disability waiting lists alone.
- (3) The average cost of waiver services for working aged adults is approximately \$37,483 each year with the States portion of match totaling nearly \$15,000 per person.
- (4) If only 1 percent of people with severe disabilities now utilizing waiver services or on the waiting list in the State of Kansas were competitively employed, the projected 10-year cost savings to the State would be over \$33 million dollars. This figure does not account for the millions of dollars in savings to Social Security at the Federal level.

A PROVEN MODEL

CPRF founded two organizations, Center Industries Corporation (CIC) in 1975 and Business Technology Career Opportunities (BTCO) in 2001, both incorporated as 501(c) 3 support organizations to CPRF, with the two-fold mission of providing competitive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and financial assistance to the underfunded programs of CPRF. Roughly half of the nearly 300 full-time employees at CIC and BTCO have a documented disability with the majority of those people having significant disabilities who have experienced limited competitive employment opportunities in the private sector.

The relevance of what we do, as it pertains to this legislation, is that we have proven; if given the chance that many folks, even with significant limitations can thrive in a competitive work environment. We provide commensurate wages with the market, a robust health care plan and matching retirement benefit program that allows all of our employees the opportunity to move away from a life of government dependency to one of independence. Our limiting factor for growth is not the lack of people with disabilities wanting to work but the lack of work itself.

We are hopeful that this new legislation will assist in remedying this dilemma and in addition provide the incentive to private sector business' to take a closer look at someone with a disability as a potential employee. We fully understand that this legislation will not serve the needs of all those with disabilities in the State and will not appeal, to all of the many vendors who contract with the State. What we do believe is a new approach is past due and something must be done differently than has been tried over the last several decades to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will support SB 444.

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