

February 15, 2018

Kansas State Legislature
House Committee on Children and Seniors
HB 2745 Transition Bill of Rights Task Force
Position: Support

Dear Chairperson Davis, Vice Chair Gallagher, Ranking Member Ousley and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2745 Establishing a Kansas Transition Bill of Rights Task Force.

My name is Kathryn Winegar and I am the parent of a 21 year old son who has Down syndrome, Kyle. Kyle graduated from Olathe Northwest in 2016 where he was active in his high school community as well as the special needs community. He continues to be connected to the special needs community by participating in Special Olympics and an organization, Inclusion Connections, a not-for-profit agency which provides activity based programming for individuals with special needs as well as job training. Kyle also receives supports through the HCBS waiver.

Following graduation, Kyle began an 18-21 year old program through the Olathe School District, ACCESS. We found the transition from high school to the ACCESS program to be well coordinated by the school district and a fairly easy transition. Through participating in ACCESS, Kyle has gained work skills by working at various job sites. The ACCESS program also facilitated access to a post-secondary program at Johnson County Community College for young adults with special needs, the Clear Program. The Clear Program enables these young adults to take modified college courses in a supported environment and become involved in a college campus. Overall, I have found Kyle's post-secondary environment to be positive and a good experience. It is what happens after this program ends where the transition process breaks down. At this point, families are left to fumble. I outline some of the problems we have encountered or witnessed below.

1. SOCIAL SERVICES—District staff are not able to provide information on how an individual with special needs can access social services once they reach adulthood. For example, there is no information provided as to how to access Social Security once the student turns 18. There is no information as to the need for guardianship and its implications or if that makes sense for the student. In addition, there is no information as to how obtain Kansas Medicaid services or what that even implies for the student. These are all services which are important for an individual with special needs to gain access to the community and to begin making steps toward independence. It is very difficult for families to find this information. While it may not be the school district who would facilitate the student's access to social services, it does seem a logical place for families to go for assistance and to begin the process.

2. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES—As mentioned above, Kyle received job training at various worksites through his involvement in the ACCESS program. This included job coaching. Kyle is one of the fortunate ones who has been offered a part time position at job site where he has been working. However, in order to access that job Kyle will need limited job coaching. District personnel do not know how to facilitate that process or how an individual with special needs can obtain supports in the workplace after turning 21. I have fumbled through four different social service agencies and think I may have found job coaching/supports for Kyle but I'm still not sure it will be in place when Kyle needs the support beginning in May 2018.

In addition, in my experience and observations, while there is effort by the school district to obtain job training sites while the student is in the district's post secondary program, there is limited assistance to the student to obtain employment following completion of the program.

3. AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES—As I discussed earlier, Kyle's transition from high school to the ACCESS program was successful. However, there was not any discussion as to other opportunities available to Kyle if he had chosen not to attend the ACCESS program following high school graduation. In addition, there is limited knowledge/discussion of programs available to Kyle now that he is completing the ACCESS program.

4. VOCATIONAL REHAB—We did not receive information about services provided by Kansas Voc Rehab in helping to obtain employment or keeping employment. Kyle and I have met with Voc Rehab, however, they also seem to be unclear as to their role in obtaining/supporting employment for individuals with special needs. While they have certain programs, those programs are not a fit for individuals with developmental disabilities. In addition, the role of Voc Rehab in obtaining job coaching for an individual is unclear. While, I have been able to obtain job coaching for Kyle following completion of his post grad program, it has taken the involvement of four different agencies.

Many of our support organizations and disability rights advocates are joining together to advocate for a ***Transition Bill of Rights for Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services***. This would serve as another way of ensuring that the planning and placement team, including parents and the student, discusses transition services to assist the family in preparing a student with a disability to transition to adult life.

Thank-you. Please vote yes to HB 2745.

Respectfully submitted

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