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February 3, 2017

Dear Chairperson Senator Carolyn McGinn and Committee Members,

My name is Shelia Nelson-Stout, CEO of OCCK, Inc. We are in our 47th year of providing services in North Central Kansas, serving about 3,000 people annually. We provide services in a 9 county rural area to children and adults with any type of disability.

I am sending you this testimony to respectfully ask for this committee's support to assist people with disabilities to be able to stay in the community living and working while they receive the supports they need to do so. SB173 will provide resources necessary for organizations to provide quality services to people with disabilities.

It has been in Kansas very recent history that people with disabilities had to leave home to enter institutions to receive services.

Since that time advocates with disabilities, family members, and providers and the Kansas Legislature have worked hard to build a strong network where people can live in the community and receive the supports they need.

Today there is a variety of services that are dwindling because of a myriad of factors. Some of those include:

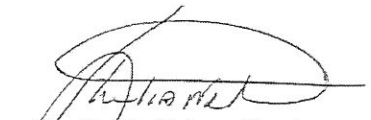
- The IDD service system has had no increase in service fees since 2008. Last year we experienced a 4% Medicaid cut and some state general funds have disappeared for our system. The results of that are that OCCK experienced a turnover rate of 41% in 2016. This means we cannot hire or retain staff needed to provide quality services.
- We are unable to get increased funding to serve people with extra ordinary needs. We are therefore hesitant to take people who have those needs.
- Our workforce does not stay long term to grow into management and other positions in the organization.
- We can now only pay enough to get people with high school educations, therefore levels of expertise of direct service staff have declined.
- We now must survive in an environment where a KanCare bureaucracy is designed to save money, and is based on the assumption that people have more services than they need. KanCare over lays everything we do, and makes decisions slow because we have to talk to three entities and the state for every decision we need made.
- Federal mandates are forcing our organizations to evolve our business model while the state only sends out surveys and "demands" through corrective action plans.

As a result Kansas has gone from being a leader in home and community based services to a state and model in crises.

We are proud of the way our Kansas legislature has shown leadership by the insistence of good, quality community based services and represented people with disabilities with the passage of the DD Reform Act in 1995.

Please return to that leadership model and represent our needs during this legislative session.

Respectfully Submitted,



Shelia Nelson-Stout
OCCK, Inc. President/CEO