



March 22, 2019

TO: Susan Concannon, Chair and
Members of the House Children and Seniors Committee

FR: Matt Fletcher, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: HB 2404 – Establishing a KS Senior Services Taskforce

Chairperson Concannon and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding the needs of aging Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Within just a few generations, Kansans with I/DD have experienced a significant increase in life expectancy. Such progress has revealed that this population is particularly vulnerable to age-related illnesses such as Alzheimer's and dementia, in terms of higher incidence and prevalence, as well as earlier onset.

InterHab's members applaud efforts, like those contained in HB 2404, to greater understand the needs of Kansans who have age-related illnesses such as Alzheimer's or dementia. However, our members note that the I/DD population does not appear to be included in the scope of the Kansas Senior Services Task Force established by the bill. We would ask that you amend this bill in a manner that includes the I/DD population.

The Kansas I/DD service system has struggled to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide support to persons with I/DD who also have Alzheimer's or dementia. There are very few external sources of expertise for age-related illnesses within the I/DD population. It's important to note that there's no "back door" to the Kansas I/DD community service system. Persons with I/DD don't age out of the system and rarely move into other service networks, which necessitates that I/DD service providers build the supports required to help these individuals continue to live in the community.

The impact of age-related illnesses such as Alzheimer's and dementia is more profound on the I/DD population than on the general public. For example, estimates indicate that more than 50% of persons with Down syndrome will develop dementia due to a genetic predisposition. This population will also develop symptoms at earlier age, with onset occurring as soon as the age of 40.

We urge that the Kansas Senior Services Task Force include persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities within its scope of study as it examines the needs of Kansans with age-related illnesses. In order to ensure the inclusion of the I/DD population, we encourage that this committee amend the bill in order to include representation from the I/DD service provider community. We believe that the expertise already developed by the Kansas I/DD service system will be of benefit both to the taskforce and to the state.