SKIL Resource Center Inc.
More Resources for People with Disabilities
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BOB BETHELL JOINT COMMITTEE
ON
HCBS & KANCARE OVERSIGHT
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Lou Ann Kibbee, Systems Advocacy Manager

Thank you Chairman Suellentrop and committee members for allowing me to present my testimony to you today. My name is Lou Ann Kibbee and I am the Systems Advocacy Manager for Southeast KS Independent Living (SKIL) Resource Center. SKIL is a Center for Independent Living that advocates for the rights of, and provides services to, thousands of people of all ages with all types of disabilities annually across the State of Kansas. We fight for justice and equality with and for them, to have the opportunities as other people do. Opportunities to live in our homes, receive the supports and services needed, receive an equal education leading to a productive and fulfilling vocation, develop relationships and families as desired, get involved in our communities, and partake in recreation and hobbies as we choose. We are driven by a philosophy of consumer choice, in that we have the freedom to make decisions and choices about our lives, as well as having the dignity of risk.

Protected Income Level & Client Obligation

SKIL would like to thank this committee for the recommendation to eliminate the Client Obligation. The Conference Committees recommendation to increase the Protected Income Level to $1,177 is certainly a positive step. As I have testified previously, if individuals are able to keep all of their monthly income they will have more funds to cover their expenses, therefore relying less on other government programs. After reviewing our customer list in March, SKIL would have 202 customers who would no longer have to pay a Client Obligation, therefore keeping more of their own money. We constantly hear from customers that more money would help them with housing, transportation, eating healthier, and supporting their families. Some individuals will be able to maintain the home they own, while others will rely less on the government for housing, or find safe and healthy housing. Some customers could use more money toward the expenses of maintaining a personal vehicle, while others could us it toward buying tickets for public transportation. And we hear from many customers who need more money to be able to keep food in their cabinets throughout the month, while others need

it toward buying tickets for public transportation. And we hear from many customers who need more money to be able to keep food in their cabinets throughout the month, while others need to purchase healthier foods to not exasperate their health issues. We also hear from customers who are parents to young children that they would use the money to support them. The positive impact to Kansans with disabilities who use Home and Community Based Services is bountiful.

While 202 of our customers will no longer have a Client Obligation, approximately 35 SKIL customers will still have a Client Obligation if the Protected Income Level is increased to $1,177 a month. So the infrastructure needed by SKIL to collect those Client Obligations each month will be reduced but not eliminated. As a result, the liability that SKIL currently carries when customers do not pay their Client Obligation each month and has to consume that cost will be reduced and greatly appreciated by SKIL. The increase of the Protected Income Level is a win for many, so thank you again for your support.

KanCare Expansion

Employment of Kansans with disabilities should be a priority in Kansas. Employment is a real key to true independence for everyone. Although we have made progress with some programs in our State through the years, it is so important that we encourage and support all people with disabilities who want to work. Unfortunately, some people with disabilities who work part time do not make enough income to qualify for health insurance through the marketplace, and therefore go without healthcare coverage. Their income does not allow them to access the healthcare needed, so they go without sometimes, which can intensify their health issues. Part time employment is many times the step needed toward full time employment for people with disabilities. But health insurance is so important for those of us with disabilities, that without coverage, they could get discouraged about working.

The workforce shortage of Personal Care Attendants is becoming drastic in the rural areas. We believe this is being caused by multiple reasons. One is that many potential workers do not have access to health insurance. When I interview applicants for myself, one of the biggest concerns is whether health insurance is available. I have private paid my attendants for 25 years and am unable to provide health insurance. Many attendants work part time and fall in the gap, not making enough to qualify for the marketplace. Health insurance would be a benefit well deserved by people working in an occupation that unfortunately is not labeled very "desirable", even though I cannot explain the impact that my Personal Care Attendants have made in my life through the last 42 years. My life would never be the same without them. I would certainly not be here today.

SKIL believes that KanCare Expansion would support these two groups of people, among many other individuals. We ask that you support the expansion of KanCare which will encourage more people with disabilities toward employment, as well as benefit vital workers that we need to assist us in our homes.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today! I am happy to answer any questions.

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