



February 20, 2019

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

I am Michael Monteferrante and I have the honor of being President and CEO of Envision based in Wichita, KS. On behalf of Envision's 550 employees and the 15,000 people who are blind or visually impaired that are served by our programs and services, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of HB 2044.

Envision's mission is "***to improve the quality of life and provide inspiration and opportunity for people who are blind or visually impaired through employment, outreach, rehabilitation, education and research.***" Based in Wichita Kansas, we have been enhancing and improving the lives of those who are blind or visually impaired since 1933.

As our mission statement makes clear, offering employment to the blind and visually impaired is a critical component of how we help those we serve. Envision believes that every American has the right to employment and works tirelessly to remove barriers for people with vision loss in order for them to enter the workforce. In fact, Envision completed construction in June of 2018 of the William L. Hudson BVI Workforce Innovation Center at its headquarters in Wichita, Kansas which is a facility dedicated to training people who are blind or visually impaired, placing them into skilled positions and providing accessibility inclusion expertise to businesses around the United States. The result is a facility designed to allow ambitious individuals with vision loss a vast array of resources that help them secure jobs and advance their careers. Envision's mission is brought to life daily by hundreds of individuals with limited or no vision who fill critical roles in manufacturing, sales, customer service, management, administration and more, with the ultimate goal of reducing the 70% unemployment rate of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The opportunity to have a job and earn an income helps enhance the lives of those we serve. It not only creates an additional level of independence, it enhances self-esteem and offers a degree of normalcy for those who are blind or visually impaired.

Passage of HB 2044 would increase our ability to grow employment for the blind and visually impaired by incentivizing Kansas companies to purchase the goods and services offered by Envision. While we are primarily concerned with the benefits this legislation would offer those we serve, we also believe this legislation would benefit Kansas based firms and Kansas government as well. It is good and sound public policy. With this in mind, we urge passage of HB 2044.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Monteferrante".

Michael Monteferrante
President & CEO