

Testimony for Autism Bill **HB 2148** to
The Transportation Committee
February 14, 2017

Nikki Jacobs
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Good afternoon,

My name is Nikki Jacobs, of Autism Hope for Families, autism advocate, educator, & supporter. Autism Hope for Families began in 2011, as a family support group for families affected with autism, in Chanute, Kansas. Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is a neurological disorder that affects 1 in 68 children. That is the fastest growing childhood developmental disorder. It costs the average family about \$60,000 per year.

Since 2011, we have raised awareness in our small town by holding fundraisers, sporting events, local events for kids and families, helped build a community adaptive park for all kids, including special needs children, & donated money to a number of families in need, donated sensory items to schools for children, just to name a few. Autism Hope for Families has also been a supporter of Autism Speaks, Kansas City. In 2016, Autism Speaks KC honored Autism Hope for Families in the Buck O'Neil Legacy Seat for raising awareness in Kansas.

As we have grown, we have branched out of Chanute, into Southeast & Northeast Kansas. We have spoken to college students at Pittsburg State University, TFI Family Services, Inc. retreat in Wichita & DCF, to foster families, gave in-services to local teachers & law enforcement about wandering and children with Autism, provided family support via phone, email, & contacts for help in several different areas of the state. We are a contact for Greenbush birth to 3 services for early interventions as support.

As Autism Hope for Families progresses, we want to continue helping families. We realize the need for more awareness, services, support, and funding for families in Kansas, particularly families in small and rural communities. We believe that an Autism Awareness license plate, for Kansas, would be one way to build more awareness & support, in Kansas. The revenue generated from these plates would help fund projects in different communities. These projects being, **but not limited to**, grants to start Autism centers, award communication devices to children and adults with ASD, educate people about autism and treatments, grant scholarships to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders in continuing education, first responders & family safety training, & to give families the opportunity to have a larger support system.

Please consider granting autism families this opportunity for statewide awareness, acceptance, support, and funding by supporting Autism Bill **HB 2148**. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nikki Jacobs
Autism Hope for Families, Inc.