

Testimony on SB173 before Senate Ways and Means Committee

March 7, 2017

Senator McGinn and members of the committee:

Good day to you all.

I am here to tell you of the dramatic need of increased rates for services with folks with developmental disabilities in Kansas.

I am here as Agency Director for Twin Valley Developmental Services. I am the original director for this agency which opened its doors over 40 years ago.

I used to be the person with the long-term vision. And most of that vision was pretty much on target. Our folks we serve have not only grown in number of people but also in becoming very active participants in their communities from getting their own jobs to forming their own bowling Teams.

But times are changing and my vision no longer exists. From being able to envision what may happen, I now wonder how many more cuts do I need to make which restricts the activity in the community for the folks we serve. Our budget for our very small agency serving - 70 folks - in a wide range of work and living programs has been reduced by over a half million dollars while our HCBS rates have been totally stagnant for over 10 year!

We are in crisis! You all had to deal with the crisis of lack of employees for Osawatomie State Hospital not long ago. But our crisis goes unnoticed! Again, our very small agency usually has as high as 5 or 6 staff vacancies. Just last weekend we had a major crisis because one of our weekend staff called in at the last minute and not able to work. We barely got this house staffed for the weekend! And we do this nearly every weekend and, oftentimes, during the week. Just this past Friday one of our staff had to console one of our people in the group home in which this incident happened concerned that she would not have staff there for the weekend. This is a lady we have served for years and we have never had to deal with these kinds of issues until recent years.

We start staff at \$9.25 per hour and have to compete with a nearby Nebraska program that starts folks at \$13 to \$14 per hour. It is nearly impossible.

As for KanCare, it feels like they are trying to save their dollars on the back of our folks. Nitpicking what they pay for, making getting people approved for services a major act of Congress, adding reports and processes (all which amount to unfunded mandates for our system), waiting forever to get approved for services because of a poorly thought out use of the Clearinghouse, and the billing has gone from fairly simple before KanCare to a very complex system fraught with landmines of complexities which delay payment and, again, cost more staff time to take care of.

This has been the most poorly thought out system ever implemented. Again, I've been around 40 years and the chaos that exists in our system today is very embarrassing. About all I can say to families anymore is "I'm sorry!". And the chaos effects our whole system. I have long time staff in my system and I have never dealt with the ongoing despair in my key staff that I do today!

Unless we get this bill approved I have 2 cuts on our board agenda later this week to consider that will reduce my people being out in the community by a vast amount! One of my greatest compliments came from an older farmer gentleman who originally opposed one of the expansions our agency was trying to make. He stopped me at a local retailer one day and stated, "I can't believe it but you have made the folks you serve a vital part of our community!"

It is unfortunate and embarrassing but if this bill does not pass we will be forced to throttle our folk's involvement in the community back in a huge way. Please don't do this to our folks!

Respectfully,

Ed Henry, CEO

Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.