



INDEPENDENCE  
INCLUSION  
INNOVATION

700 SW Jackson St., Suite 1100  
Topeka, KS 66603  
p: 785.235.5103  
f: 785.235.0020  
e: [interhab@interhab.org](mailto:interhab@interhab.org)

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TO: Representative Sean Tarwater and  
Members of the House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

FR: Matt Fletcher, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: HB 2416

Chairman Tarwater, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2416, which will expand employment opportunities for Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The membership of InterHab has long identified the promotion of employment efforts as a priority, and has been a leader in Kansas in the development of a full spectrum of employment supports for persons with IDD in order to assist them in becoming more independent and productive members of their communities.

### **HB 2416**

Kansas is blessed to have a low unemployment rate, which means that most businesses are challenged with attracting quality workers. Given these workforce shortages, employers need to utilize every possible pool to overcome these challenges. In spite of this, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities remain largely excluded from the workforce, with some national estimates placing this population at nearly 80% unemployment. This is unfortunate, because individuals with developmental disabilities are willing and able to work. They are the quality workers that many businesses are searching for.

However, employers have often underutilized the persons with IDD as a qualified pool of employees due to concerns regarding accessibility and productivity issues. And sometimes it's been due to an ignorance of the abilities of this population.

HB 2416 seeks to break down such barriers by incentivizing employers to work in partnership with IDD community service providers in creating employment opportunities for persons with IDD. HB 2416 will create greater choices and options for individuals with IDD in becoming independent, productive members of their communities.

We respectfully ask your support of HB 2416.

### **Spectrum of Employment Supports**

The Kansas IDD service system has cultivated a full spectrum of employment services in order to meet individuals at the level of job preparedness that they are at, help individuals explore job functions and types that

they may have an interest in, develop needed soft and hard job skills all within a supportive structure for that exploration. All of the following employment service options available in Kansas are community-based employment options:

- ***Center-Based Employment -***  
Formerly referred to as “sheltered workshops”, these are paid employment exploration opportunities based within community service providers. This employment option is often manufacturing or assembly-based and is done in partnership with businesses that need production assistance. Minimum wages or special wages are offered, often on a piece rate basis. If a special wage is utilized, it is offered via a certificate from the federal government that exempts the provider from paying minimum wage rates due to the provision of pre-vocational training supports.
- ***Supported Employment –***  
Employment specialists seek out job opportunities within local businesses and match those opportunities to persons with IDD who wish to find employment. Employment specialists work alongside the individual, training and supporting them in the position. Ongoing support can last for months or even years in order to ensure successful job placement.
- ***Internship-Based Vocational Training –***  
Initiatives such as Project SEARCH and End-Dependence Kansas seek to facilitate work preparedness as well as the development of job skills through internship opportunities within local businesses. Such efforts have proven to be highly successful, but require significant resources and often are limited in scope to smaller numbers of participants due to their intensive nature.
- ***Innovative Approaches -***  
Increasingly, ‘out of the box’ approaches have been explored, such as social enterprise efforts, which aim to create business models that employ persons with IDD while returning proceeds back into the effort. Another example of innovation is the support of individuals with IDD in starting and maintaining their own small businesses.

It’s important to note that each of the above types of employment services are required in order to assist persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in successfully pursuing employment. Persons with IDD often utilize many, if not all, of these types of services in their quest to obtain employment. Often, a number of these types of services are utilized at the same time based on the person’s needs.

We would urge the Legislature to remain supportive of the full spectrum of employment supports offered by IDD community service providers. Only by supporting and enhancing all of these services will we make progress in assisting Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities in becoming independent and productive members of their communities.