



Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community Based Services and KanCare Oversight

Written Testimony

June 24, 2024

Kansas Joint Bob Bethel Committee Members:

On behalf of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD), thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Joint Committee. KCDD's mission is to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families to lead systems change, build capacity, and advocate for inclusive, integrated, accessible communities where everyone belongs and thrives throughout our state. KCDD is made up of self-advocates, family members, state agencies, and other partners from across the State.

First and foremost, KCDD commends the laser focus and bipartisan efforts of the legislature to reduce the waiting list last session. Providing waiver access to 500 Kansans, some of whom have been waiting for a decade, will be life changing for those individuals and their families. This has been a top priority for KCDD for over a year, and we commend each of you for your diligence last session to reduce the waitlist and start addressing the ongoing crisis that is reality for Kansans in the disability community as well as efforts to cap our IDD waitlist at 4800. *KCDD is already focused on working with key stakeholders to continue our long-term efforts to bring our IDD waitlist to zero.*

As you know, despite the incredible progress made last session, many Kansans with I/DD, Kansas families, and our state's caregivers are still faced with an ongoing crisis - the state's extensive I/DD waitlist and waittime and a disability workforce in crisis. We are very pleased with the work KDADS is already engaged in to address developing a Direct Support Professional (DSP) career ladder in Kansas; and look forward to our ongoing engagement with the state agency.

In the state of Kansas, approximately 5,407¹ individuals with I/DD are waiting for life sustaining services such as in-home care, day-service programs, and specialized medical care. In February, there were approximately 5,240 individuals on the I/DD waiting list. ² The continued growth of the waitlist between February to June of this year demonstrates the overwhelming need for a permanent solution to better serve Kansans with I/DD, their families, and our state's caregivers.

Eliminating the I/DD Waitlist

As we mentioned above, KCDD's top priority remains funding, staffing, and eliminating the I/DD Waitlist. Significant investments must be made to Eliminate the Wait for HCBS Waivers, which will result in far better outcomes for Kansans with disabilities to have better access to community support, workforce

¹ [waiver-program-participation-report-6.15.24.pdf \(ks.gov\)](#)

² [waiver-program-participation-report-1.15.24.pdf \(ks.gov\)](#)

development opportunities and live longer, healthier lives.

KCDD is encouraged by and supportive of the development and implementation of the Community Supports Waiver (CSW), however, this step alone will not solve the long term needs of the IDD community in Kansas.

Improving Waitlist Management Systems

As the State works to Eliminate the Wait for HCBS Waivers, allocating one-time funds for investment in an updated, accessible, and user friendly IDD waitlist management system is paramount. Kansans with I/DD, their families, the Kansas Legislature, and state agencies would benefit tremendously from a system of transparency and accountability with modernized technology and government transparency, especially as we eagerly await the development and implementation of the Community Supports Waiver (CSW).

To effectively manage the current I/DD waitlist and prepare for the transition of eligible individuals from the I/DD waitlist or waiver to the CSW, Kansas cannot rely on their current systems and investment in waitlist and waiver technology enhancements must be made. KCDD recommends the creation of a stakeholder workgroup to explore waiver management and tracking systems currently utilized in other states to better inform this investment.

Supporting the Disability Workforce

As individuals with IDD become eligible for Waiver services, after waiting for more than a decade, they still may not be able to find a Direct Support Professional (DSP) to facilitate the in-home care due to staffing shortages and lack of rate parity amongst those who choose self-direct services and provider agencies. In rural areas and underserved populations in Kansas, these issues are exacerbated.

KCDD commends KDADS' Request for Proposal to secure a vendor to study and design a defined career ladder for DSPs that will enable them to develop career-enhancing skills to assist in the advancement of DSP careers, achieve a livable wage, fulfill a workforce need, and professionalize the DSP profession in Kansas, not to mention that our Kansan DSP workforce gets access to critical benefits like health care and retirement.

In addition to the development of a DSP defined career ladder, we must start increasing and enhancing the rates that will attract, retain, and create a better career path for all professionals and providers, as well as entities supporting our community.

Thank you, again, for your ongoing leadership addressing the needs of Kansans with I/DD. The Council looks forward to working with members of this committee as we continue to make progress for Kansans with I/DD.

Sincerely,

Sara Hart Weir
Executive Director
Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities
sara@kcdd.org