



Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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Testimony on HCR 5011 before the House Committee on Health and Human Services February 15, 2006

Chairman Morrison and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Kevin Siek and I am a disability rights advocate for the Topeka Independent Living Resource Center. Our agency is a civil and human rights organization with a mission to advocate for justice, equality and essential services for all people with disabilities.

I am here today to provide testimony in favor of HCR 5011, a resolution to express the Legislature's recognition and appreciation for family caregivers throughout the state.

80 percent of all long-term home health care in America is provided by family caregivers. 78 percent of all adults receiving such care rely entirely on uncompensated or informal care provided by family and friends. Even among adults with substantial disabilities, those who need assistance with three or more activities of daily living, like folks on our HCBS waiver programs, two thirds of them rely entirely on informal care.

HCR 5011 states, these care-giving services are of inestimable value. While some aspects of these services are inestimable, like the feeling of security a person gets from knowing they have reliable, trustworthy caregivers who they can depend on in an emergency, the economic impact has been estimated by the National Family Caregivers Association.

In Kansas, there are over a quarter of a million family caregivers providing 275 million hours of care annually. If they had been paid market value for all the care they provided it would amount to nearly 2 ½ billion dollars a year.

It is only right that we recognize these family caregivers in, at least, some small way for their selfless service to family and the tremendous contribution they make to their communities and the state of Kansas.

Clearly, we owe these caregivers far more than a simple thank you. A good place to start would be to insure a living wage for personal care attendants on the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver Programs.

HCR 5011 recognizes the work of family caregivers associated with the Department on Aging, but we should not forget the many family caregivers associated with the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. We recommend amending HCR 5011 to include language that would allow these caregivers to be recognized as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HCR 5011. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Advocacy and services provided by and for people with disabilities.