



March 16, 2021

Barb Helm, Executive Director
Arcare, Inc.
Written testimony in opposition to HB 2421
House Taxation Committee

Chairperson Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today. I am the Executive Director of Arcare, Inc. (Arcare), a certified 501(c)(3) organization. Arcare was founded in 1982 and designed to provide caring, planned, professional support for individuals with disability throughout their lives. Initially, the focus was on developing full-service, long-term plans for each of its clients. Over time, the non-profit has added additional programs and core services tailored to meet each person's needs and each family's desires. Arcare serves individuals with all types of disabilities and is certified by the State of Kansas to act as a legal guardian and/or conservator for individuals with disabilities.

While the long term impacts of the current health and economic crisis are being determined, we must not push aside or fail to address the prominent issues that have been affecting the community of Kansans with disabilities and service providers for years. Over 4,000 Kansans are currently on a waiting list for I/DD services. Many of these individuals will wait for 8 or more years to receive the services they qualify for. A new waiting list is being proposed for individuals on the Traumatic Brain Injury waiver, unless the State of Kansas includes additional funding for the program to match with available Federal dollars. If a waiting list is created for these individuals, many will be forced into skilled nursing facilities while waiting for services that would have kept them safely at home and in the community. The cost for providing care in skilled nursing for individuals who otherwise could be served in their homes in the community far exceeds the short term savings created by a waiting list.

All of these issues are compounded by the crumbling service provider infrastructure. Skilled service providers are choosing to leave the State of Kansas and secure employment in the neighboring states of Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Missouri, where Medicaid expansion has created greater opportunity for employment and salaries are higher than in Kansas. This is creating a workforce shortage in Kansas as service providers struggle to hire and retain skilled workers, while their hands are tied by the low state reimbursement rate for home and community based services.

Right now, because the bill does not have a fiscal note, the true cost of this bill remains unknown. Historically, tax cuts such as these have repeatedly cost the State more than anticipated. If these tax cuts for high income tax filers and corporations are implemented, the only way to maintain services that Kansans need will be to raise other taxes, such as sales taxes or local property taxes. These tax increases disproportionately impact low- and moderate-income Kansans, while doing nothing to address the additional needs of the community we are facing right now.



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Kansans deserve responsible and thoughtful fiscal policy during tough times. That means being prepared for the current economic and health crisis, while making sure families have their basic needs met. We shouldn't weaken our state with shortsighted tax measures. The large cost and components of this bill should not be the state's priority policies in the short-term, given the urgent and serious needs across our state, or in the long-term, as our state strives to make our tax structure more equitable.

We ask you to vote against HB 2421 and reprioritize your focus on problem solving for the current times by strengthening the state's resources to help struggling Kansans.

Sincerely,

Barb Helm, Executive Director
Arcare, Inc.