

House Commerce Committee  
Testimony in Favor of HB 2356  
March 14, 2017

Chairman Mason and Honorable Committee Members,

I am Natalie Bright appearing on behalf of the Coalition for Opportunity in favor of HB 2356, which proposes to update the Kansas Bidder Preference Program (program). The Coalition for Opportunity in partnership with other stakeholders supported the creation of the program, which created a state procurement incentive that engages the private sector in hiring Kansans with disabilities as well as purchase goods and services from SUL vendors. The goal of the program is to increase SUL sales and decrease the high unemployment rate for persons with disabilities. Specifically, this program is a two-prong approach.

The first component of the program allows up to a 10% credit on state bids for any state contractors who purchase products and services from a SUL vendor. The second component incentivizes the creation of certified businesses, who once certain criteria are met, may also receive a 10% contract advantage on proposals to the state. HB 2356 proposes two amendments. They are as follows:

- The first amendment adds Kansas Rehabilitation Services, the primary placement agency in the State for persons with disabilities, as a certifying body along with KDADS. Currently, a certified business must send a list of disabled employees to the Division of Purchasing in a sealed envelope who then send it to the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) for certification. Adding the second agency will provide an additional certification office for the business seeking certification.
- The second amendment allows a business to certify every three years. Current law requires a business to reapply annually as if it were a new business. The current annual certification process is burdensome to those employees with chronic disabilities.

Over the past several days, I have spoken to disability advocates who expressed some concern with some of the initial language in HB 2356. I have again worked with Rep. Erin Davis to draft a balloon amendment to address the concern to expand the base of those who qualify as a person with a disability. As such, I am recommending the committee consider the following amendment:

- Page 3, 39-43 strike language and insert “(iii) is an individual with a disability pursuant to the disability standards established by the social security administration as determined by the Kansas disability determination services under the Kansas department for children and families.”

With adoption of the above amendment, HB 2356 will make the program friendlier and more inclusive. The Coalition continues to work with our partners to address the high unemployment of the blind and disabled, and this program is one of the tools available to help reduce the unemployment rate of disabled and blind Kansans. I urge you join our efforts and support the passage of HB 2356.