

Chairman Tyson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today and ask for your support of SB 345.

As many of you know, Johnson County Development Supports facilitates career and personal development for Johnson county residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Friends of Johnson County Developmental Supports is an independent, 501 C 3 non-profit organization that provides additional supports to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive residential, day or case management services from Johnson County Developmental Supports.

The money Friends of JCDS raises helps individuals secure affordable housing. That housing includes accessibility changes such as ramps, wider doorways and accessible bathrooms. Additionally, Friends of JCDS provides a Special Assistance program which helps applicants pay for important needs like dental fillings, new shoes for work and sometimes even necessities like food and utilities.

Johnson county residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities come to Friends of JCDS for accessible and affordable housing and with requests for help for basic needs. This organization provides a valuable service by meeting needs for accessible, affordable housing choices.

On January 9th 2018, Friends of JCDS received a grant to make significant renovations to 12 of their homes in Johnson County. With these funds (combined with other grants), Friends of JCDS plans to renovate and make important, necessary accessibility improvements to the homes for their residents. Importantly, these renovations, funded by grants, ensure that Friends of JCDS continues to offer low cost and accessible options to over 50 Kansans. Friends of JCDS is also planning for additional housing options as they continue to meet the growing need for affordable and accessible housing for the intellectually and developmentally disabled in Johnson County.

I am respectfully asking that you help make these dollars go farther by granting a sales tax exemption for the upcoming construction projects to more effectively utilize the grant and donor funds ensuring all necessary improvements. The savings from tax exemptions on the construction projects will provide additional funds to make more accessible bathrooms that a person can use independently, more ramps, wider doors, and ceiling lifts that reduce falls and injuries as well as help to preserve the dignity of these residents.

Most of these construction projects will take two weeks or less and be given to small local contractors, so these dollars will stay in Kansas and create local jobs. Existing statute provides similar exemptions for other groups providing these types of services (for example in Cherokee County, Kansas).

Thank your for listening and I ask for your support for passing SB 345 favorably out of committee.

Testimony by Senator Dinah Sykes