

**Senate Committee on Public Health & Welfare**

**January 23, 2020**

**Lou Ann Kibbee, Systems Advocacy Manager**

Thank you Chairman Suellentrop and committee members for allowing me to provide written testimony today. My name is Lou Ann Kibbee and I am the Systems Advocacy Manager for Southeast KS Independent Living (SKIL) Resource Center. SKIL is a Center for Independent Living that advocates for the rights of, and provides services to, thousands of people of all ages with all types of disabilities annually across the State of Kansas. We fight for justice and equality with and for them, to have the same opportunities as other people do. Opportunities to live in our homes, receive the supports and services needed, receive an equal education leading to a productive and fulfilling vocation, develop relationships and families as desired, get involved in our communities, and partake in recreation and hobbies as we choose. We are driven by a philosophy of consumer choice, in that we have the freedom to make decisions and choices about our lives, as well as having the dignity of risk.

Employment of Kansans with disabilities should be a priority in Kansas. Employment is a real key to true independence for everyone. Although we have made progress with some programs in our State through the years, it is so important that we encourage and support all people with disabilities who want to work. Unfortunately, some people with disabilities who work part time do not make enough income to qualify for health insurance through the marketplace, and therefore go without healthcare coverage. Their income does not allow them to access the healthcare needed, so they go without sometimes, which can intensify their health issues. Part time employment is many times the step needed toward full time employment for people with disabilities. But health insurance is so important for those of us with disabilities, that without coverage, they could get discouraged about working.

The workforce shortage of Personal Care Attendants is becoming drastic in the rural areas. We believe this is being caused by multiple reasons. One is that many potential workers do not have access to health insurance. When I interview applicants for myself, one of the biggest

concerns is whether health insurance is available. I have private paid my attendants for 25 years and am unable to provide health insurance. Many attendants work part time and fall in the gap, not making enough to qualify for the marketplace. Health insurance would be a benefit well deserved by people working in an occupation that unfortunately is not labeled very "desirable", even though I cannot explain the impact that my Personal Care Attendants have made in my life through the last 42 years. My life would never be the same without them. I would certainly not be here today.

SKIL believes that KanCare Expansion would support these two groups of people, among many other individuals. We ask that you support the expansion of KanCare without barriers or conditions to provide healthcare that will encourage more people with disabilities toward employment, as well as benefit vital workers that we need to assist us in our homes.

Thank you for the opportunity!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ken Ann Killebee". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Thank you for the opportunity!".