



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

February 15, 2023

TO: Representative Nick Hoheisel, Chair and Members of the House Committee on Financial Institutions and Pensions

FROM: Jerry Michaud, President/CEO,
Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, Inc. (DSNWK)
2703 Hall St., #10, Hays, KS 67601
785-625-5678

RE: HB 2272 - KPERs retirement exemptions – IDD Services

Chairman Hoheisel and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jerry Michaud and I am the President of Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas (DSNWK), a non-profit organization serving 550 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) for over 55 years. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony to this committee as **securing employees, for vital direct support positions in our IDD service system, is the basis for our support of HB 2272.** The passage of this bill would be welcomed progress in our strained system.

The community services system in Kansas helps people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) everyday. These services are vitally important and organizations like DSNWK, and others across our state, have been working collaboratively together for decades in partnership with the state of Kansas, KDADS and other state departments to meet the needs of people with IDD.

Recruiting and retaining workers in this field is difficult and the recent pandemic added stress upon that already strained system. We are grateful for the support of the legislature and all of our dedicated and loyal employees who have helped carry on vital services and supports.

We have taken a multipronged approach to address the presenting workforce challenges. Like many businesses today, sign-on and retention bonuses are standard and getting the word out regarding open positions requires constant effort. In addition to these bonuses, we've increased our advertisements for recruitment and today we are spending more in a month than we would have spent in an entire year in advertising before. We have increased our social media presence and have also increased referral bonuses to help get qualified candidates to our doors. In some of our most challenging circumstances, we implemented crisis pay to the wages of our staff who step up to work extra to fill open hours or shifts.

In the last quarter of 2022, we had 16 open positions in four communities and turnover remains a major concern. In December 2022, turnover was hovering at 38.91% - an alarming rate but an improvement over the prior December (2021) where turnover was at an all time high of 50.99%.

We remain diligent in our efforts to provide essential community services for individuals with I/DD as those services do not stop when circumstances are difficult. Our support of HB 2272 is another of those actions to find solutions.

Our Mission to serve and support people with IDD in Northwest Kansas continues. Through the vital action taken by the Kansas legislature last session, restored hope by making critical adjustments to our rates. **Support of HB 2272 would help KPERS organizations like ours to help recruit and retain employees in these vital IDD direct support positions.**

Thank you for your leadership in these extraordinary times and for your support of this bill and these vital community IDD services. There are many voices echoing with gratitude. On behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and the staff throughout the state who support them - Thank you!