



Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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501 SW Jackson Street • Suite 100 • Topeka, KS 66603-3300

February 23, 2021

House Social Services Budget Committee

H.B. 2249 with proposed amendment

Testimony by:

Ami Hyten, JD; Executive Director

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Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Social Services Budget Committee today on HB2249.

The Topeka Independent Living Resource Center (TILRC) is a civil and human rights organization. Our mission is to advocate for justice, equality and essential services for a fully integrated and accessible society for all people with disabilities. TILRC has been providing cross-age, cross-disability advocacy and services for almost 40 years to people with disabilities here in Shawnee County, across the state of Kansas, and throughout the nation. The full inclusion and integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of community living drives the services and advocacy our organization provides, such as addressing inequities like the Protected Income Level addressed in HB 2249.

When the Legislature included funds to increase the protected income level to \$1,177/month just two years ago, it is indisputable that a substantial number of people were helped – 90% of the people who had co-payments ranging from \$.16 to \$1,607/month benefitted. As advocates had been concerned, however, the good work done on the issue began to get chipped away, as early as January 1, 2020. Since the protected income level was set at a dollar amount, not indexed to a percentage of SSI, each time beneficiaries received an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to their benefits, they “lost ground” on the amount of income protected.

As of 2021, with two COLAs now, the 8% of folks who had co-payments of \$500 eliminated by the previous increase all most likely have some small co-payment, and some unknown number of people who had co-payments of \$101-\$500 may have a co-payment now.

We are asking this Committee to finish the good work that was started on this issue by amending HB 2249 at line 13 by striking 150% and replacing it with 300%. This would effectively eliminate co-payments and keep that intent in place for years to come by indexing the amount to SSI levels.

Advocacy and services provided by and for people with disabilities.

The last 10% of beneficiaries who did not benefit from the increase of the protected income level to 150% are all people who are “dual eligible” for Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income or who are on Social Security Disability based on their or their spouse’s work history and payment into the system already.

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These are people who did not expect to have to “scrape by” under the eventuality of having a disability that meant they needed help to remain living in their homes. Yet each month as they make these payments, that is what they are being forced to do; they are making choices between food, healthcare, medications, and other essentials. We work with one family who is so impacted by the client obligation, they are considering moving their mother to a nursing facility. The cost to the state of her institutional care would far exceed the amount of her current HCBS plan cost, place her at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, and deprive her of the freedom to enjoy community living among family and friends.

Increasing the Protected Income Level to 150% does not realize the administrative savings and efficiencies that would accompany an effective elimination of the client obligation that would happen if the amount were increased to 300% of SSI. By amending HB 2249 to 300% of SSI, the state, managed care organizations, provider agencies, and HCBS beneficiaries all save.

Attached to this testimony are statements from people who would be impacted by the increase of the Protected Income Level to 300% of SSI. As you can see, the change for these last few people would be profound.

We would appreciate this Committee’s leadership on this issue by amending HB 2249 to 300% of SSI and favorably recommending the Bill for passage.

For 182-233-1561 - ATT cyste

2/10/21

To Whom it may concern
My name is Kenneth C. Duke, I am
handicapped & living off Social Security.

I have a client obligation of \$604.00
every month - after paying this my rent
and buy a few groceries I have spent all
of my Social Security and have nothing to
live on the rest of the month. I average
4 to 6 trips to Joyaha from Emporia to
Dr. appointments with expenditures I see, which
costs me gas & telephone fees. I take 20 some
meds every day - so it comes down to deciding
what to pay to live. Please pay something
to help lower client obligations - I can
not have to make choices each month on
whether to pay rent - buy food or not go
to doctor appointments and other essential needs
for every day living.

Thank you.

Kenneth C. Duke

February 17, 2021

My name is Claud Evans,

I am 59 years old. I am a disabled man living with chronic congestive heart failure every day of my life. I live alone in a small apartment and now I'm at a point in my life where I require help to complete my activities of daily living. I live on Social Security Disability income and that is it. I want to breakdown my finances below so that whoever reads this can see how quickly that money disappears. My SSDI check is \$1300.00/month. This is what I pay :

Rent \$334

Straight talk cell \$40

Greatcall \$24

Gas/Elec \$200

Cable/internet \$200 (this is all I have to do daily without any visitors and not being able to leave or even walk further than my bed to my livingroom chair – worse now with COVID)

OTC meds \$50 (required due to my CHF 4,000mg of mag. Daily plus iron, aspirin, fishoil, fiber)

Liability Insurance \$50 (have a vehicle but could only drive if desperate or emergency)

Credit Cards \$100 (these have saved me when I have no money left at end of month)

The bills above are just a few dollar's shy of \$1,000 already. This only leaves me \$300 left for food and household items for the entire month. I often have to go without simple things like cleaning supplies or new socks/undergarments etc. because I don't have enough money.

Lastly, I have this new \$144/client obligation every month for this program to pay out of pocket. I have not been successful yet at adjusting my budget to afford this bill. I am behind but plan to make small payments when I can to avoid losing the help I need daily. I just can't do everyday tasks on my own anymore. Millions of people live the same exact way, if this premium could be removed this could mean more money available for food and household items I need that most people take for granted.

I did not choose to live this way and I most certainly did not choose this disability. I had a massive heart attack at the young age of 37. I have had too many open heart surgeries and failed defibrillators to mention. I am just lucky to be alive. My life did not turn out the way I had hoped but I try to find happiness in every new day because that is all I can do in my condition. Please understand this, it would be so helpful if this additional financial burden (client obligation) could just disappear. It would mean one less struggle every month.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Claud Evans



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2020 CLIENT OBLIGATION PAYMENTS

Claud Evans
2914 North Fleming #507
Garden City, Kansas 67846

	<u>OWED</u>	<u>PAID</u>	<u>DATE PAID</u>	<u>PAST DUE</u>
January	\$0.00			\$0.00
February	\$0.00			\$0.00
March	\$0.00			\$0.00
April	\$0.00			\$0.00
May	\$0.00			\$0.00
June	\$41.00			\$41.00
July	\$144.00	\$288.00		-\$144.00
August	\$144.00			\$144.00
September	\$144.00			\$144.00
October	\$144.00			\$144.00
November	\$144.00			\$144.00
December	\$144.00			\$144.00
TOTAL	\$905.00	\$288.00		\$617.00 OWED YTD

Statement from a family member for a HCBS Consumer who has a client obligation:

My mother is eighty nine years old living with Alzheimer's disease. My father died at the age of fifty one of an asthma attack, he was working for Hills packing company at the time. They didn't seem to help my mother financially after his death. I remember how much he would complain about all of the deductions from his check all of the time.

With the money she gets from social security she barely has enough for her medications, food and utilities. We had to go to the Housing authority on her behalf to see if they could help with some of her rent. It just doesn't seem fair that after all those decades of deductions that towards the end of their life there having to ask for public assistance.

Sincerely,
Pat Rocha

2-18-2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My NAME is Doris Winston I DO my Home Base Service thru TOPEKA INDEPENDENT LIVING RESOURCES. I AM writing to you to plea that you DROP the MONTHLY CO-PAYMENTS for this SERVICE.

It is very difficult to survive less on provide on a fixed income. I AM unable to buy personal items AND NECESSITIES AT TIME DUE TO COST. Guess what, DOING WITHOUT IS THE NEW NORMAL!

After 32 years on disability my ANNUAL income is less than \$15,000. This is a DISGRACE! Your co-payment for people is UNDIGNIFIED! DROP the CO-PAYMENTS, help us stop this payment, just taking what little money we DON'T even have to spare to give you a CO-PAYMENT. AMERICA? SORRY I CAN'T TELL!

Sincerely,

Doris Winston