



## *Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities*

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*"To ensure the opportunity to make choices regarding participation in society  
and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities"*

### **Senate Public Health & Welfare**

February 15, 2012

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity of providing testimony regarding SB 397. I am Kerrie Bacon, the Interim Executive Director for the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD). The Council is comprised of over 60% self advocates (people with developmental disabilities), parents and guardians of people with developmental disabilities. KCDD is a federally mandated and funded entity under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. Part of our responsibility is to study and examine the Kansas system for people who have developmental disabilities and to advocate with policymakers for improvements.

The Council is supportive of a bill which would take the wording "mental retardation" out of all statutes and replace it with people first language such as "people with intellectual disabilities" or an "intellectual disability". The current version of this bill uses the language, "intellectually disabled" (see Section 2, 5<sup>th</sup> line). The reason this is not people friendly is that it sounds as though the only thing about this person is the disability, when in fact there are many facets to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. A great example is Lauren Potter with the "Glee" TV series, who is an actress with an intellectual disability. She currently is actively involved in a YouTube campaign to fight the R-word. In November 2011, Ms. Potter was appointed to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, where she will advise the White House on issues related to people with intellectual disabilities. She is much more than the word "disabled" and along with others who have intellectual disabilities, deserves to have the respect of language "person with a disability". We would respectfully request an amendment to the bill reflecting people first language.

New Section 1 provides a definition that does not mirror state or federal statute and KCDD would recommend deleting the definition from the bill.

KCDD would also be supportive of adding a section to the bill that would create a policy to update statutes, regulations and policies with this updated, person first language whenever revisions are made to those statutes, regulations or policies.

The Council encourages you to pass this bill favorably from committee.

Thank you for permitting me to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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