



Kansas Disability Caucus 2022

Executive Summary

2022 Kansas Disability Caucus - Executive Summary

Together We Rise, United in Action!

Background and Overview

In August of 2022, about 200 disability advocates met together at the Hotel Topeka at City Center in Topeka for the 16th Kansas Disability Caucus! People of all ages and from across the state participated in this three-day Caucus that tried to make sure that all people with disabilities were listened to and included. The purpose of the Caucus is to create new disability leaders in Kansas, to educate Kansans with disabilities about policy making and inspire them to participate in it, and to determine major problems that Kansans with disabilities have and possible solutions for these issues. The Caucus started in 1988 where about 90 people met together in Salina. In 1993, the Caucus was moved to Topeka where more people were able to go to the Caucus. Since then, more and more people have joined the Caucus over the years. Each Caucus has had important things to talk about over the years, ranging from caregivers to employment, from transportation to health insurance. The Caucus is held every two years.

This year, people who went to the Caucus got together to work for real change, to identify top problems and specific solutions, and to get educated on important issues. Breakout sessions focused on advocacy, employment, housing, transition, decision making, and more. Caucus Regional Sessions gave people the opportunity to talk about issues in different parts of the state (see overview below). People who went to the Caucus heard from inspirational keynote speakers Stephanie Woodward, Phillip McGruder, and Colin Olenick. All who were there felt the power of a community that unites for change and equality!

For more information about the Kansas Disability Caucus, Inc., contact Lou Ann Kibbee, Board Chairperson, at kansasdisabilitycaucus@gmail.com or 785-415-2366.

Caucus Sessions

Kansas disability rights advocates went to West, East, or Central Caucus regional sessions. People who went to the Caucus were people with all types of disabilities and of all ages, disability rights advocates, and disability service providers. Each region was given the task of figuring out what people with disabilities need to live a life of freedom and choice in their homes and communities. People who went to sessions also talked about solutions to every issue facing the community. Below are the suggested solutions for the top problems that people shared during these sessions:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Make sure that decisions about people with disabilities are made with people with disabilities
- Have a way for policymakers to ask people with disabilities what concerns they have
- Have a way for people with disabilities to tell policymakers about their concerns

Education

- Train and educate schoolteachers on Disability Pride, Inclusion, and History
- Make sure Special Education teachers want to keep being teachers at their schools, like congratulating them for their hard work
- Make sure schools are doing a good job to work with students with disabilities to plan for their life after school and tell them about supports in their community
- Work with colleges to make more classes and give money to people who want to learn American Sign Language (ASL) and Spanish

- Make more disability supports at colleges for students with disabilities

Employment

- Tell more people about ways that people with disabilities can work, like Working Healthy, Work Opportunities Reward Kansans (WORK), and Supports and Training for Employing People Successfully (STEPS)
- Tell more people about ways people with disabilities can work and save money without losing the other help they receive
- Make more ways to teach people with disabilities how to do jobs so they can make enough money to live on
- Tell more people who hire people for jobs about the good things that happen when they hire people with disabilities, how to support people in jobs, and how to make the place where the job is accessible
- Make more ways for people to want to hire people with disabilities

Caucus Sessions (continued)

Guardianship and Supported Decision Making

- Teach and support parents to take care of their babies or children with disabilities
- Teach families and people who work with students with disabilities about the choices people with disabilities have that lets them be in control of their own life, like Supported Decision Making
- Ask people with disabilities to share their stories about why they like being in control of their life

Healthcare

- Tell more doctors about how to care about people with disabilities and how to make the doctors' offices accessible
- Make more ways for people to get the mental health supports they need in emergencies
- Give people with disabilities who have Medicaid more time to see their doctor
- Make more ways for people who live in areas without a lot of people to be able to get to a doctor
- Give more money to hospitals that don't have a lot of people who go to them

Housing

- Make more houses that don't cost a lot of money to live in and are accessible
- Make more houses in places that are safe and do not have a lot of bad people that also don't cost a lot of money to live in and are accessible
- Make a job for someone who will say if houses are accessible or not when they are built and who will tell on people who are not following the law
- Make ways for houses that are accessible to be saved for people with disabilities who need them
- Make a meeting with people with disabilities and people who make decisions about houses and find ways to count how many houses in Kansas don't cost a lot of money to live in and are accessible

Medicaid Expansion

- Ask people with disabilities to make videos about what Medicaid Expansion means to them and share the videos with people who care (e.g., Home- and Community-Based Services [HCBS] KanCare Oversight Committee and Alliance for a Healthy Kansas)
- Read about laws and ways other states have passed Medicaid Expansion

Personal Assistance Services

- Pay caregivers the same amount of money no matter what type of disability waiver the person has
- Give caregivers more money and work benefits like insurance to make caregivers want to stay at their jobs
- Tell more people about the jobs they can get as caregivers

- Teach people with disabilities who hire their own caregivers ways to train their caregivers about their needs (e.g., wound care, catheter training, transfer techniques)
- Make ways that people with disabilities won't have to wait so long for Kansas Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

Public Infrastructure

- Teach local businesses about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and why following the law is important to people with disabilities
- Make a job for someone who will say if businesses are following the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) law or not
- Train ambulance drivers, fire fighters, and police officers about how to work with people with disabilities
- Make ways for more people with disabilities to have internet that works well and doesn't cost a lot of money

Social Security Administration

- Make more ways to teach Kansas Social Security Administration (SSA) workers about their job so people with disabilities won't have to wait as long, and will get better services
- Teach Kansas Social Security Administration (SSA) workers to talk to SSA directly and Kansas benefits specialists (e.g., Working Healthy)
- Make sure that Kansas Social Security Administration (SSA) workers are doing a good job by watching them do their job and giving them feedback
- Don't take away the help people with disabilities need because they get married

Transportation

- Make transportation better for people with disabilities by making plans if there's an emergency or if there's not enough drivers
- Make sure that transportation drivers who are good at their job want to keep their jobs
- Give transportation drivers more training and money for driving people with disabilities
- Pay for transportation with the Kansas Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers so people can have someone drive them to places other than just the doctor or work
- Make a meeting with people with disabilities and people who make decisions about transportation to talk about transportation problems and ways to fix them
- Make other ways for people with disabilities to get transportation, like Uber and Lyft, especially for people who live in areas without a lot of people
- Make ways for people with disabilities to get transportation whenever they need it



Awards Were Given To...

Grassroots Advocate

Awarded To: **JULIA CONNELLIS**

For her commitment as a grassroots advocate to increase access and independence for Kansans with disabilities.

Roger Frischenmeyer Peer Mentor

Awarded To: **ANTHONY FRISCHENMEYER, STEPHANIE SANFORD**

For being a dedicated mentor and advocate for Kansans with disabilities.

Community Achievement

Awarded To: **LABETTE HEALTH**

For their commitment to ensuring access and promoting health of Kansans with disabilities.

Government Achievement

Awarded To: **REPRESENTATIVE JASON PROBST**

For his commitment and dedication to ensuring independence and access for Kansans with disabilities.

Youth up to age 19

Awarded To: **ISABEL EINWICH**

For being a strong advocate for access and independence of youth with disabilities in Kansas.

Youth between ages 20 and 30

Awarded To: **SHANE LEWIS**

For being a strong advocate for access and independence of young adults with disabilities in Kansas.

Lifetime Achievement

Awarded To: **KATHY LOBB**

For a lifetime of commitment to advocating for the independence, rights, and freedom of Kansans with disabilities.

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