



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 115		DATE: 3/8/2021	
COMMITTEE: Workforce Development			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ANN ZIMPFER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: redzzz@att.net	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/8/2021 7:31 AM
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I submit this testimony today in support of HB 115. I support this bill because HB 115 would provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to be successful in the job force in Missouri. As the parent of an adult with an intellectual disability we understand the frustration of finding the "right fit" for many of life's milestones. Many decisions were made throughout our son's life based on the input of physicians, specialists and a village of support in his educational years. The guidelines for this outcomes were outlined in IEPs, Individual Education Plans. After he graduated from Special School District, these supports were written in an ISP, Individual Support Plan. Through these plans, assessments through Vocational Rehab and input from ourselves we knew that a Sheltered Workshop setting was best for our son. This is only our story. Sheltered workshops provide a higher level of support for the folks who need it. This is not the right fit for everyone. Many Missouri citizens with disabilities are unable to find the right fit, in the workforce, due to limitations beyond their control. We must begin to see the individual, not the limitation. As stated in this bill, we must look at the "individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a significant disability". As you read and listen to the testimony presented to you, think about all citizens of Missouri. Let's be the state that values and provides opportunity for all the citizens of this state. We are the Show Me State. Let these individuals have the opportunity to show everyone they have value and and are respected by the lawmakers of this State.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVO		PHONE NUMBER:	
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I am in Support of this Bill. People with disabilities shall have a fair opportunity to work in a State Department or Division. We need to be a State that never discriminates against its citizens.



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: E. BRIANA CONLEY		PHONE NUMBER: 314-956-2990	
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Testimony before the House Workforce Development Committee March 8, 2021 Submitted by E. Briana Conley Paraquad, Inc. 5240 Oakland Ave, Saint Louis, MO 63110 (314) 289-4200 bconley@paraquad.org TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 115 Paraquad would like to thank the Chair and members of the House Workforce Development Committee for allowing us to submit testimony, as well as Representative Walsh Moore, for sponsoring this crucial legislation. Paraquad is one of the oldest and largest independent living centers in the country. Centers for Independent Living are unique because more than 50% of our board and staff are people with disabilities – we are the experts when it comes to disability policy and programs. Paraquad champions equity and independence for people with disabilities through services, partnerships, education, and advocacy. A statewide Employment First policy is foundational to equity and independence. HB 115 would require all state agencies to prioritize competitive, integrated employment as the first and preferred outcome when planning or providing services for people with disabilities. The bill defines competitive, integrated employment as work performed in the community where an individual interacts with nondisabled coworkers and is paid a wage comparable to someone without a disability doing similar work, and not less than minimum wage. State agencies would be required to work towards this outcome by providing information annually to people with disabilities, and in the case of minors, their parents, on competitive employment, the relationship between a person's earned income and his or her public benefits, and assistive technology. HB 115 ensures people with disabilities have the opportunity to understand and explore education and training as pathways to employment, and promotes collaborative relationships between state agencies, between state and private agencies that offer supported employment services, and between state agencies and employers to overcome barriers in meeting workforce needs. The primary alternative to competitive, integrated employment is participation in a sheltered workshop, often for less than minimum wage. Although sheltered workshops were originally designed to provide job skills and training that would allow employees to move into the general workforce for at least minimum wage, the numbers do not show they adequately fulfill that purpose. In Missouri, more than 5,000 people are employed by sheltered workshops. The average Missouri workshop employee is 43.5 years old, has been in a workshop program for 11.3 years, and earns an hourly wage of \$5.49. An Employment First policy like the one outlined in HB 115 with an emphasis on partnership, education, and support would be more effective in ensuring people with disabilities have the education and training they need to work in their communities and earn a living than sheltered programs. For most of us, work is central to our identities. When we meet someone new, one of the first pieces of information we exchange is what we do for a living. Whether we work in construction, accounting, law, farming, healthcare, or the service industry, we derive a

sense of identity and purpose from our place in, and contributions to, the workforce. We take pride in learning a new task or accomplishing a goal in our professional lives, and we're disappointed when we fall short. The same is true for people with disabilities, regardless of how significant their disability. Imagine for a moment your child going through school with the end goal being a menial job making a fraction of what the law says people without disabilities must be paid with no realistic chance at advancement. Workshops approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must pay at least 10% of minimum wage – that is \$1.03 an hour. Is that the outcome you would want your child's educators to aim for? For many people with disabilities and their families, this is reality. HB 115 requires schools, vocational counselors, and state agencies start with the assumption that everyone can work and help all Missourians achieve their full potential. Not only does participation the general workforce promote confidence and self-determination, it offers a path out of poverty. 65% of people living in poverty long-term are people with disabilities. In 2016, people who were placed through supported employment saw their annual wages increase by an average of more than \$13,000. Increased wages are a benefit to the individual who earns more money, to the local economy where he or she spends money, and to the state in the form of increased tax revenue. We know that misconceptions about the impact of earning a higher wage on public benefits and lack of knowledge about employment options are two major barriers for people with disabilities seeking meaningful work. HB 115 addresses both issues without removing, defunding, or discouraging alternatives; it simply guarantees individuals and families have access to all relevant information on and adequate access to all options when making decisions related to employment. Respectfully Submitted, E. Briana Conley
Public Policy & Advocacy Manger



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ELTON THOMAS		PHONE NUMBER: 314-650-0574	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: PARAQUAD		TITLE: MEMBER OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
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EMAIL: eltonthomasmba@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/8/2021 9:31 AM	
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Since birth I have had an eye disease known as Retinitis Pigmentosa leaving me legally blind my entire life. It took a great deal of faith by my family, teachers, and peers to believe that I would some day become successful. My family, teachers, and peers gave me the support that raised my confidence, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration connected me to college, training, and career coaching that gave me the tools to succeed. In May of 2020, I graduated with a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Missouri St. Louis with honors. In my perspective, Employment First is not in any way suggesting that the existing system is bad, but rather, it is an opportunity to make leaps and bounds in a system with the focus of needed improvements to guide the workforce to equal and equitable participation of people with disabilities. A grand opportunity to give the Social Services sector of government tools they need to succeed. In conclusion, HB115 is an imperative next step to creating an even better workforce of equality. As a blind professional, I had worked with RSA in connecting other people who are blind seeking careers with employers who needed a better understanding of how to accommodate them. One key element I would suggest would be to forms teams like this and informing the disabled job seeker and the employer of the importance of having an established interactive process to accommodate people with disabilities as this is too often one power tool too often forgotten or not thought of by both. Sincerely, Elton Thomas



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: ERIKA LEONARD		PHONE NUMBER: 573-680-6424	
REPRESENTING: MARF		TITLE: MARF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
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Providing a path for individuals with developmental disabilities to choose their own career path is the best approach to creating an inclusive Missouri workforce.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: GREG KRAMER		PHONE NUMBER: 314-853-4473	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EASTERSEALS MIDWEST		TITLE:	
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EMAIL: greg.kramer@esmw.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/8/2021 9:50 AM

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My name is Greg Kramer and I am employed by Easterseals Midwest. We are a not for profit organization that supports people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities throughout the state of Missouri. We provide a full range of services and supports from Employment to Residential to Day Habilitation to Autism to over 5000 children and adults and employ over 1500 Missouri Citizens. ESMW is in full support of establishing Employment First legislation for the State of Missouri.. The commitment to this endeavor is to ensure that all Missourians have the opportunity to work in a competitive, integrated setting as the first and preferred choice. It is time that Missouri commits its resources to make this happen.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KIM ANDERSON		PHONE NUMBER: 660-422-1084	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CENTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES; MARF; APSE-MISSOURI		TITLE: EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR	
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Legislation supporting Missouri to become an Employment First state is best-practice policy to create options for Missouri Employers and individuals with disabilities that strive to be employed in the community.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LUKE BARBER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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EMAIL: Luke.t.barber@umsl.edu	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/8/2021 3:20 PM
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I am currently working multiple jobs as a person with a diagnosis of Autism. These jobs are classified as Community Integrated Employment and are Required to pay above minimum wage. Currently the minimum wage requirements for hourly employees in 2021 are \$10.30 in Missouri and \$7.25 Federal and requires the higher amount. This means for 2021 Missouri Employer's pay \$10.30 or More Per hour to the employee. However under 14C of Department of Labor at the Federal, there is a loophole in which people with disabilities can be paid as low as \$0.60 per hour and retain their eligibility for benefits. This means that they still receive Social Security, Food stamps, Medicaid and any other assistance program that they qualify for as an individual with a disability. This also sets a stigmatization that their time and work isn't valuable. The Sheltered workshops are a state run for profit business and Should be held to the same standards as any other company. The pay disparity between employees with disabilities and the CEOs and Administration of these workshops is criminal. This Technically could be hotline to DMH Abuse and Neglect for the ways in which they are committing Financial abuse. People with disabilities want to work and make a living and have that self esteem boost by seeing the customers and doing what they do in the community . These changes would allow for people to work and get jobs in the community in which they live , where they can learn how to do stuff , and Enjoy activities and Events as a result. They are unfairly being denied opportunities for growth . Even some companies say they want to hire more disabled individuals but struggle with outreach and training and building accommodations necessary to support employment and allow for the customized options to match people to what they can do well.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARY THOMPSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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Testimony before the House Committee on Workforce Development March 8, 2021 Submitted by Mary Thompson
Paraquad, Inc. 5240 Oakland Ave, Saint Louis, MO 63110 (314) 289-4200 mthompson@paraquad.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 115 Paraquad's Accessible STL program provides a wealth of training and technical assistance for businesses, organizations and government entities working to increase inclusion in the St. Louis community. We provide the following services: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) site surveys, customized training and education, policy review and development assistance and ongoing technical assistance. Paraquad both initiated and responded to business, governments, organizations, and nonprofits to facilitate a shift in their workplace culture that is more welcoming and inclusive to employees and customers with disabilities. All workers benefit from a more diverse workplace. Studies show that working alongside employees with disabilities makes non-disabled individuals more aware of how to make the workplace more inclusive and better for everyone. Staff turnover is also lower—by up to 30 percent—when a well-run disability community outreach program is in place. Work environments that are more inclusive of persons with disabilities often see improved productivity levels. For example, Microsoft has built a successful disability hiring program specific to people on the Autism spectrum. More organizations are discovering that employing persons with disabilities is not as expensive or challenging as is often assumed. A DuPont employee survey found that when employees with disabilities are graded on the same scale as other employees, 90 percent of them receive performance ratings of "average" or above average. Organizations must ensure that persons with disabilities are represented in their workplace. "In the case of people with autism, the knowledge base and technical aptitude of individuals can be very high, so we had to figure out why we were not placing them. We discovered the problem—the interview process. We changed our approach to what the process should look like. Now we work with a local group to bring candidates in for a week-long academy. We offer teamwork and technical exercises, and a lot of training. At the end of the week, we have an idea of those who will receive a job offer." – Jenny Lay-Flurrie, Chief Accessibility Officer, Microsoft

Leaders must provide employees with disabilities with accessible tools and technology and/or a formal accommodations program. Consider cultivating greater awareness through formal training programs for those without disabilities to learn about the tools and accommodations available for better integration across teams. "We have a support services team that is made up of 300 people with intellectual disabilities. They work in four different locations in the U.S. and do fulfillment services and external client engagement. That helps the individual, the community, and us. They service all customers – those with and without disabilities; both internal and external." – Wil Lewis, SVP of Diversity and Inclusion, Bank of America

According to employers participating in a recent study by Job Accommodation Network, a service from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, a high percentage (59 percent) of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$500 per employee with a

disability. Respectfully Submitted, Mary Thompson Accessibility Specialist



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: ROBYN SCHELP		PHONE NUMBER: 660-441-3260	
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Missouri Disability Empowerment's mission is to empower individuals with disabilities and promote inclusivity through advocacy efforts which lead to legislative and policy change. While much of our recent work has been related to special education in Missouri schools, we understand that our children will grow up. Our desire is for every setting of the community to be inclusive, from schools to neighborhoods to the workforce. Employment First is a policy that prioritizes competitive and integrated settings for working age people with disabilities as the first and preferred outcome. It does not remove other options of support that currently exist. We want all individuals with disabilities to have choices as they enter the workforce. Please support HB115, as it is a great step in creating inclusive communities, where everyone is valued and encouraged to reach their potential.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: WILLIAM GAMBLE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-4876	
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CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: LYNNE SCHLOSSER		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF SHELTERED WORKSHOP MANAGERS		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 1521 PEPPERWOOD			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63146
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