

JOHNSON COUNTY  
KANSAS  
Developmental Supports

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Feb. 1, 2022

To: Sen. Carolyn McGinn, Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Local Government

Re: Senate Bill 316

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony opposing SB 316. Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

At Johnson County Developmental Supports, we oversee a network of 2,397 individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability. There are 78 providers of Home and Community Based Services in Johnson County that support these individuals to live in the community rather than in hospitals or institutions. This focus on community living makes the implications of this bill of particular concern to service providers and the people we support.

The intent of SB 316 to restrict the number of group homes, or homes where marginalized individuals live with roommates, in a residential area violates the tenets of the Fair Housing Act. This act ensures that residents are not restricted from living in desired neighborhoods based on protected status, which includes disability. The enactment of this legislation would undoubtedly prevent people with disabilities from living in the neighborhoods they so choose purely because they are living with roommates in a setting licensed by the State of Kansas.

In addition to violating the Fair Housing Act, SB 316 will cause an undue hardship on low-income residents with disabilities. Affordable housing, especially in Johnson County, is minimal. As such, by restricting the density of group homes, this bill is effectively restricting the total number of group homes and neighborhoods that will be available to these residents. Therefore, increasing the total number of people who cannot find affordable and accessible homes, which is already a severe crisis in Johnson County.

The individuals with disabilities we support often need complex care and rely on services from multiple local, state and federal resources. Our numbers in Johnson County indicate that about 45% of the individuals we support have a diagnosis of mental illness. This co-diagnosis makes them a further target for discrimination under this bill.

The introduction of a bill such as this showcases how far away society truly is from realizing the full inclusion and civil rights of people with disabilities. Please consider the broader implications of bills such as SB 316 and what they mean for the civil rights of all Kansans.

We hope you will consider the intended and unintended consequences of SB 316 and how it will impact the thousands of Kansans with disabilities who simply want to have the same rights to live in the community as everyone else.

Sincerely,



Chad VonAhnen  
Executive Director  
Johnson County Developmental Supports