

Testimony in Support of SB 93
Senate Committee on Education
on behalf of Johnson County Community College
by Dick Carter, Jr.
February 2, 2015

Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Committee on Education, my name is Dick Carter, Jr., and I appear before you today in support of SB 93, which includes Johnson County Community College in the GED Accelerator program.

JCCC was excluded from participation in the GED Accelerator program in SB 429, which passed in 2014 and was signed into law by the Governor. As written, that bill provided for performance based funding for CTE programs and established a funding formula to eligible institutions, for those students who were dual enrolled in a GED program and an eligible CTE program.

Johnson County Adult Education (JCAE) serves about **2000 students annually**, with about **half of those (1000) ABE/GED students** and the other half ESL students. Since the change to the new GED exam in January 2014, the number of GED testers nationally has dropped by 79%, and GED testers in Kansas dropped by 55%. Following that trend, JCAE ABE/GED enrollment year-to-date has also declined, but only by about 28%. The significantly lower level of decline is due to intense marketing and redoubled efforts on student recruitment and retention. Our current **goal is to enroll 800 ABE/GED students by the end of this fiscal year**. And results show that in FY 14, 66% of students enrolled in JCAE showed educational level gains. This rate exceeds state averages.

During the past six months, program staff has been preparing to launch the Accelerating Opportunities-Kansas (AO-K) program which combines GED instruction with technical instruction. Later this spring we will pilot our first AO-K Certified Nurse Assistant class, the first step on a proposed new medical technical career pathway. As this pathway builds, we hope to expand the program by including GED instruction within an Industrial Technology pathway. We also hope to expand into other technical career programs, but the cost of providing GED instructors in the technical classroom is almost prohibitive. Resource limitations restrict our ability to establish and grow the program to meet student needs and demands as well as the needs of the labor market. The GED Accelerator provides much-needed financial support to establish and grow this program. This required resource will enable numerous Individuals who currently struggle to find and retain employment that pays a living wage to find new career options opened to them. And Kansas employers will welcome a new group of workers with the knowledge and skills needed to help their businesses grow.

As students near readiness for GED testing, they meet with one of two JCAE Transition Coaches (TCs). The TCs help students articulate their interests and goals and overcome potential obstacles (work schedules, child care, transportation and funding). Many students enter the GED program thinking of a GED as their terminal goal. The TCs help them “dream bigger” and consider career options that the students had not previously considered. Currently, many students struggle to embrace yet another course of study after completing a GED. Accelerating

Opportunities-Kansas will enable our students to work ***concurrently*** on career training while completing studies for a GED. Our data currently suggests that many students now take several semesters off between completing the GED and enrolling in a post-secondary program. Even with the best intentions, after a student completes a GED, if they wait to enroll in further education, at best momentum is lost, and sometimes the plan to enroll never materializes. By combining GED instruction with technical career training, students can complete both goals faster and are more likely to persist.

To date, our ***goal has been to enroll 33% of GED graduates*** into post-secondary educational programs. In 2013, JCAE celebrated ***235 new GED graduates***, and in 2014, we realized ***191 new GED grads***. We would welcome the privilege of supporting 200+ students each year in finishing not only a GED, but also a valuable career training program. We believe that the additional resources and incentives available through GED Accelerator will help us achieve that vision.