



**Proponent Testimony on SB 358
For the House Education Committee
March 9, 2016**

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Chairman Highland and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you in support of Senate Bill 358. SB 358 makes a small change to the statutes governing the Kansas Nurse Educator Service Scholarship so that it broadens the list of eligible institutions of higher education to include several non-profit independent colleges in Kansas.

Brief Overview of Nurse Educator Service Scholarship:

The Kansas Nurse Educator Service Scholarship exists to support graduate-level nursing students pursuing a degree that qualifies them to teach nursing at the college level. In 2006, the state legislature elected to create the scholarship in response to the high need across the state for Registered Nurses (RNs).

The scholarship requires all parties to have a stake in the efficient use of the funding. The state has appropriated \$188,126 to this scholarship for FY 2016 and FY 2017. Participating colleges and universities must match one dollar for every two dollars provided by the state. And the student receiving the scholarship must commit to teach nursing at a Kansas college or university for at least one year for every year of scholarship support received.

Need for Continued Attention:

The shortage of RNs has not abated, particularly in non-major-metropolitan communities across the state. One of the barriers that was identified in 2006 and persists to this day is there is an insufficient number of qualified nursing faculty to expand capacity to teach undergraduate nursing classes that lead to RN certification. We have thirteen public or non-profit institutions that provide a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN). For those institutions to receive national accreditation from one of the two national accrediting bodies for nursing, they must have a specific number of faculty with advanced degrees in nursing/nurse education. Thus, expanding the number of nurse educators is an important tool in meeting the need for addition RNs in Kansas.

Change Proposed in SB 358:

In current statute, students are only eligible to apply for the Kansas Nurse Educator Service Scholarship if they attend a graduate-level nurse educator program that is approved by the Kansas Board of Nursing. This limits the pool to Fort Hays State, Pittsburg State, Washburn, Wichita State, and the University of Kansas Medical Center.

The reason these are the only institutions eligible is because, by statute, the Kansas Board of Nursing only approves graduate programs that are Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) programs.

However, there are alternative nurse educator graduate degree programs that are not APRN programs, but are of very high quality and are essential for Kansas' efforts to meet any critical nursing shortages. These are still graduate level (master's and doctorate) degrees taught at institutions that have national accreditation and good standing. But because of the statutory language, students who attend these other schools and enroll in programs that would prepare them to teach college nursing are ineligible for the scholarship. These other programs at all either already in existence or in the incipient stages at non-profit independent colleges in Kansas: Baker University (in Baldwin City), MidAmerica Nazarene University (in Olathe), Newman University (in Wichita), Tabor College (in Hillsboro), and the University of Saint Mary (in Leavenworth).

Thus, SB 358 modifies the statute governing eligibility for the Kansas Nurse Educator Service Scholarship by offering a second, alternative route for institutions to qualify. The second route would be that students could be eligible if enrolled in a graduate nursing degree program at an accredited independent (non-profit) institution in Kansas that is headquartered here, has open enrollment, and has been received national accreditation for masters or doctorate degrees in nurse education or nurse administration.

These four criteria are carefully written to mirror other statutes governing Kansas' scholarships that allow eligibility for students at Kansas' nonprofit colleges; ensure that any and all state student aid stays in the hands of Kansas students and Kansas institutions; and ensure that eligible students must be attending a graduate nursing program with established high quality standards. We suggest this language, as well as the amendment that was added by the Senate Education Committee, after consulting with staff at both the Kansas of Nursing and the Kansas Board of Regents to ensure their comfort with any changes.

Conclusion:

The Kansas Independent College Association strongly supports SB 358 because it is carefully crafted to expand the eligibility standards for the Nurse Educator Service Scholarship and thereby gives us and the state of Kansas a stronger tool for addressing a critical state need. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional data as you request.