

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee my name is Jim Genandt. I am president of the Manhattan Area Technical College and I am appearing here today on behalf of the Kansas Association Technical Colleges in opposition to Senate Bill 420. Our members are concerned that the changes proposed in Senate Bill 420 will have a negative impact on the current access Kansans have to postsecondary education, particularly high school students. To the best of our knowledge there is no problem that exists as it pertains to the delivery of technical education and workforce development that requires this type of action by the Kansas legislature.

Due to differing missions and offerings, the service areas of our technical colleges, community colleges, and state universities often overlap by necessity. As it pertains to technical education and workforce development, most of the current technical colleges have a longer history of serving secondary students due to our prior “existence” as vocational-technical components of local school districts than other institutions. Our mission in the technical college environment is focused on providing prepared graduates for job placement. Our charge is providing programs of study to reinforce a qualified and skilled workforce for the state. Senate Bill 420 would have a negative impact on our ability to continue to provide those graduates for the Kansas economy.

The Kansas Board of Regents works with all of us to meet workforce and education demands, with a focus on the students. Their current policies regarding geographic service areas regulate many aspects of the issue being raised in this legislative proposal. Further, it is our understanding that KBOR is committed to reviewing those very policies. It is also important to note that it has been KBOR’s practice to conduct such reviews in consultation with all participating colleges and universities with the best interests of Kansas students in mind, and we do not expect this review to be any different. Without a careful and deliberate review of these policies this legislation could create unintended consequences regarding compliance with Higher Learning Commission requirements for our college’s accreditation.

If tuition/fee pricing is an underlying issue for Senate Bill 420, we submit that KBOR can also manage it within its policies and procedures. This would be the more appropriate pathway to curtail any issues with the Higher Learning Commission. All of the public higher education institutions in Kansas need the accreditation of the Higher Learning Commission for our “stamp of approval.” The policies and procedures set by the Kansas Board of Regents are a preferred venue of the Commission for oversight to keep all of the colleges and universities efforts in compliance and in good standing.

Additionally, Senate Bill 420 places unnecessary impediments on the choice of students seeking technical education and training by creating a barrier to entry to technical colleges. Students are currently making the choice of which institution prepares them best for the workforce and job placement in Kansas. The construction of artificial barriers to the student's best opportunities for technical education and training would be unfortunate.

In closing, the Kansas Association of Technical Colleges would ask that Senate Bill 420 not be adopted the following reasons:

1. KBOR's commitment to review geographic service area policies with a view of the whole post-secondary system;
2. Reduction of prepared graduates for a qualified and skilled workforce for Kansas;
3. Creation of barriers for students to select their best alternative for technical education and training;
4. The success of Senate Bill 155 would be adversely impacted by impairing the ability of our members to deliver our programs to secondary students; and
5. Unintended consequences regarding the continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission may be created.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and I would be happy to answer any questions committee might have.