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MEMORANDUM

To: Chairperson Estes
Members of the House Committee on Education

From: The Office of Revisor of Statutes

Date: February 6, 2025

Subject: HB 2185 – Updating the Kansas national guard educational assistance act to include dependents of national guard members and the Kansas national guard educational master's for enhanced readiness and global excellence (EMERGE) program to include other advanced degrees.

House Bill No. 2185 (HB 2185) would amend to higher education financial assistance programs for National Guard members to expand the scope of such programs. First, the Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act (NGEAA) would be expanded to include dependents of National Guard members. Second, the Kansas National Guard Educational Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) Program would be expanded to include other graduate degree programs.

The NGEAA provides financial assistance to guard members in an amount equal to tuition and fees for up to 15 credit hours each semester. Any award under the program is offset by any federal financial assistance provided for active National Guard membership.

Under HB 2185, the NGEAA would retain the same eligibility criteria for members of the Kansas National Guard to participate in the program. The law would also allow dependents of guard members to be eligible for program benefits. A dependent is defined as an individual who is sponsored by a member of the Kansas National Guard and who is registered as an eligible dependent of the sponsoring member in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). To participate in the program, the dependent must:

- Hold a high school diploma or a high school equivalency credential;
- Be enrolled at a Kansas postsecondary educational institution;
- Not hold a bachelor's degree or other postsecondary degree; and

- Complete and submit the Kansas Student Aid Application with the Kansas Board of Regents.

The EMERGE Program provides the same level of financial assistance for National Guard members who are accepted into a master's degree program at a postsecondary educational institution. Under HB 2185, the Program is expanded to include guard members who are accepted into professional degree program or doctorate degree program. A professional degree is defined as a postgraduate degree program that requires more academic work than a master's degree but is not a doctorate degree.

The EMERGE Program requires participants to serve in good standing the National Guard for at least 48 months after completing their degree program. Under HB 2185, participants in the new degree programs must serve for 72 months and are subject to the higher 3.0 grade point average standard to remain eligible.

If enacted, HB 2185 would become effective on July 1, 2025.