



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Proponent Testimony on HB 2185 For the Senate Education Committee

March 10, 2025

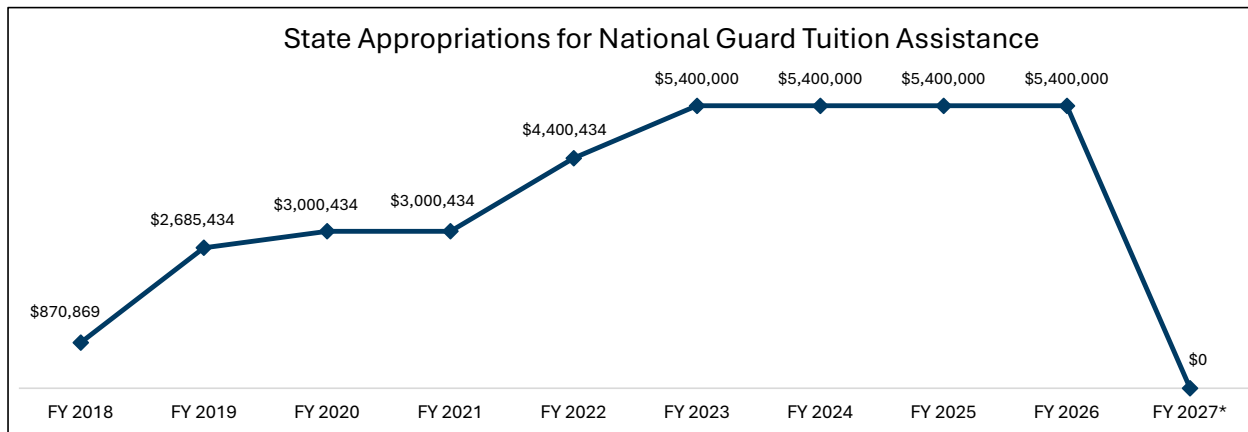
Elaine Frisbie, Vice President for Finance & Administration Kansas Board of Regents

Good afternoon, Chair Erickson, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss HB 2185.

Among the 22 student financial aid programs the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) administers on behalf of the Legislature, there are two programs for members of the Kansas National Guard: the tuition assistance program established in 1996, and the EMERGE program enacted last session for certain graduate programs.

Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act

The Kansas National Guard Educational Assistance Act provides payment of tuition and fees for undergraduate enrollment up to 15 credit hours per semester. The state benefit is offset by any federal financial assistance received by the member from their active National Guard service. KBOR sends payment to the institutions from a specific State General Fund appropriation for this program, which has been increased by the Legislature in the past few years:



**The Legislature has not yet agreed to appropriate \$5.4 million for FY 2027, as requested by KBOR.*

★ LEADING HIGHER EDUCATION ★

HB 2185 would allow a member of the Kansas National Guard to delegate their tuition benefit to one dependent by a sponsorship. This delegation can occur only during the member's service and not be delayed to a future date. The bill provides that if the member were to fail to satisfy the service requirement, only the Guard member would be responsible for repayment of the assistance.

HB 2185 provides that the assistance would be available to dependents only after Guard members' tuition assistance is covered. It can take several months for Guard members to apply for and enroll, for the National Guard to approve Guard members for assistance, and then for KBOR to be advised of the students' status to coordinate with the institutions for payment of tuition and fees – which can extend well into the semester. For KBOR to be able to identify funding for sponsored dependents, it seems dependents could not enroll and begin receiving assistance until the spring semester at the earliest. We would coordinate with the National Guard to track the individuals and hope any unspent state appropriation for the program is allowed to carry over from one year to the next in the event eligible individuals present for tuition assistance.

Kansas National Guard Educational Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) Program

The EMERGE program provides financial assistance for National Guard members seeking a master's degree, covering tuition and fees up to 15 credit hours per semester. On or before July 1 of each academic year, the Adjutant General selects up to 100 eligible National Guard members who have applied to the EMERGE Program to receive assistance. The number of eligible National Guard members in the program is capped at 200 members in any one academic year. In Fall 2024, 21 students received \$77,919 in assistance, at nine different institutions.

HB 2185 would expand the eligible degree programs beyond master's degrees to include professional and doctorate degrees. The service requirement would be lengthened from four to six years in exchange for the doctorate or professional degree tuition assistance. The bill also sets the required grade point average for professional and doctorate degrees at 3.0 rather than 2.75.

Administrative Impact

For the costs attributable to the administration of the program by the Board of Regents, enactment of HB 2185 by itself would not require the addition of staff, although the bill would add new complexities to the two programs serving National Guard members. Presumably, the Board of Regents would need to establish a waiting list for dependents or some mechanism for identifying the costs for two groups from within the one appropriation for the National Guard Tuition Assistance Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.