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The Adjutant General and Director of  
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Laura Kelly, Governor

March 10, 2025

Committee on Education  
Kansas Senate  
Chairwoman Renee Erickson  
Attn: Cyndie Rexer, Committee Assistant  
State Capitol, Room 144-S  
300 SW 10th Ave  
Topeka, KS 66612

Proponent In-Person Testimony, HB 2185  
For the Senate Education Committee  
March 10, 2025  
Lt. Col. Keith Marshall  
Chief of Government and Legislative Affairs  
The Adjutant General's Department

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Committee,

The Adjutant General's Department respectfully submits the following testimony for the hearing on House Bill 2185, Updating the Kansas National Guard Assistance Act, on March 10, 2025. Our agency's legislative liaison, Lt. Col. Keith Marshall, will testify in support of the bill.

Kansas National Guard tuition assistance falls under two programs - the Kansas National Guard Education Assistance Act for undergraduate studies and the EMERGE Act for graduate studies. We are asking for a policy update for these programs to bring them in line with similar programs at the federal level and in other states so we can retain our personnel and compete for the best recruits nationally. We are **not** asking for any additional money; this is a policy update only.

When a Kansas National Guard member uses the Kansas National Guard Education Assistance Act, they incur a service commitment. They must continue to serve in the Kansas National Guard for two years beyond the last semester of education they complete. Some personnel will never use this program themselves. They may have a bachelor's degree already, or they may not desire to obtain one. However, if they can pass it to a dependent, it can still be a retention tool for them. The rule changes we are requesting would be the same: for every semester the dependent completes, the member must continue to serve in the Kansas National Guard for two years beyond completion of that semester.

A cursory look indicates that the following states have programs similar to what we are proposing with regard to dependents and National Guard tuition assistance:

- Alabama G.I. Dependent Scholarship Program
- Arizona State Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Arkansas Military Dependents Scholarship Program
- Colorado National Guard Tuition Assistance Program
- Connecticut Veterans Tuition Waiver
- Georgia Hero Scholarship
- Idaho National Guard Dependents' Educational Assistance Program
- Illinois National Guard Grant Program
- Massachusetts National Guard Family Education Program
- Michigan National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program
- New Hampshire National Guard Tuition Waiver Benefit
- New Jersey National Guard Tuition Waiver Program
- Pennsylvania National Guard Military Family Education Program
- Texas Hazelwood Act
- Washington National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant
- Wisconsin G.I. Bill
- Wyoming National Guard Educational Assistance Plan

The second part of this bill updates the Educational Master's for Enhanced Readiness and Global Excellence (EMERGE) program. This is a terrific program but as it stands only includes Master's degrees. We are seeking to expand the program to include all post-graduate degrees. There are long-standing vacancies in our formations in critically manned fields like legal and medical. The degrees required to hold these positions are not covered under the current EMERGE law; if we can update it to include advanced degrees, including in the medical and legal career fields, we can use it to put people to work in those positions. This has the potential to be one of the greatest tools we've had to build unit and individual readiness, and with your help we can do it with just a policy tweak under current funding levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter. You are always welcome to reach out to me if you need anything. You may also contact my legislative liaison, Lt. Col. Keith Marshall, at 785-646-0011 or [keith.marshall.1@us.af.mil](mailto:keith.marshall.1@us.af.mil).