



**NEUTRAL Testimony on HB 2515**  
**For the House Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Committee**  
**January 30, 2020**  
**Matt Lindsey**  
**President, Kansas Independent College Association**

Chairman Tarwater and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony related to House Bill 2515.

**Kansas' Independent Colleges:**

KICA represents the twenty independent colleges of Kansas, all of which are not-for-profit institutions of higher education, all of which offer undergraduate degrees, all of which have their principal campus in Kansas, all of whom are regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and all of whom maintain an open enrollment policy consistent with Kansas statutes.

The state of Kansas, via the Kansas Board of Regents, has specific obligations governing “private and out-of-state” educational institutions, per the Private and Out-of-State Post-Secondary Educational Institutions Act (K.S.A. 74-32,162 and subseq). All twenty KICA institutions are exempt from that statute. Thus, for the independent members of KICA, KBOR has no governing role (as it does for the six 4-year Regents universities), coordinating role (as it does for the community colleges, technical colleges, and Washburn University) nor regulatory role (as it does for any for-profit college or college based outside of Kansas that wishes to operate here). Furthermore, KICA institutions do not receive any direct institution funding from the state of Kansas, as befits our independent status.

KICA applauds the intent of HB 2515. We agree with the bill’s sponsors that the State can and should do more to support Kansans pursuing some form of post-secondary credential as a means to enhancing their employability and lifetime earnings. We are also grateful that Section 5 includes further enrollment in a public or private postsecondary institution based in Kansas as an option for meeting the requirements of receiving the scholarship.

We have two concerns that we feel are important to address to improve the bill and ensure that Kansas’ non-profit colleges are able to fully contribute our energies and support for the purpose of HB 2515.

**Concern #1: Include Non-Profit Colleges as Eligible Institutions:**

First and most importantly, we strongly request that the eligible institutions described in Section 1(b)(1) include Kansas-based non-profit colleges which offer associate’s degrees and/or short-term certificates. While most of the KICA institutions focus on baccalaureate-level degrees, several KICA institutions offer a number of associate’s degrees, including Baker University (Baldwin City), Barclay College (Haviland), Central Christian College of Kansas (McPherson), MidAmerica Nazarene University (Olathe), and Newman University (Wichita). Furthermore, two KICA institutions – Donnelly College in Kansas City and Hesston College in Hesston – are primarily two-year colleges similar to community colleges. Combined, those institutions awarded 262 associate’s degrees and 100 short-term certificates in the 2018-2019 academic year. While no where near the volume awarded by Kansas’ public community and technical colleges, nonetheless private colleges’ associate’s degree programs share a similar focus on workforce-relevant skills and on educating Kansans – and at a lower cost to the taxpayer.



Therefore, KICA asks that Section 1 of HB 2515 be amended, possibly as follows, beginning with line 8:

(b) As used in the Kansas promise scholarship act:

(1) "Eligible postsecondary educational institution" means:

(A) Any community college established pursuant to chapter 71 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto; or

(B) a technical college established under the laws of this state; or

(C) any private college or university located in Kansas and which is exempt from approval by the state Board of Regents under K.S.A. 74-32-164 and amendments thereto.

Without addressing this change in particular, KICA cannot offer our support for this legislation.

### **Concern #2: Defining Skilled Jobs**

Because the bill's intent appears to be directing students to pursue post-secondary credentials in high-demand fields, we feel it is important to be specific on that point. Section 2(c)(4) instructs the state Board of Regents to "annually collaborate with the department of commerce and Kansas business and industry to identify up to 10 job fields that currently have the highest need for skilled employees." We argue that the word "skilled" is too vague a term relative to the purpose of the legislation. One can be "skilled" in a number of fields that do not require any college education. For instance, amid the winter weather in Kansas few would argue against the critical need for public works and transportation employees skilled in keeping our highways and roads plowed and safe. Yet however important that work may be, it is unlikely to require a college degree of any kind to be considered "skilled."

Therefore, we encourage the committee to replace the last line (Page 2, line 20) such that it reads: "have the highest need for employees with a postsecondary credential."

### **Conclusion:**

KICA is grateful for the committee's attention to this issue and willingness to consider our comments on HB 2515. Inclusion of our colleges as eligible institutions for students to pursue their Promise-Scholarship-supported education is necessary for our support, and a clearer statement on "skilled" employees will more clearly signal to students, institutions, and employers the value of any postsecondary credential.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your deliberation. If the committee has further questions, I am happy to follow up.