



Testimony: IN FAVOR OF House Bill No. 2144

Provided to: Kansas House Education Committee
Hon. Steven Huebert, Chairman

Provided by: Board of County Commissioners
Butler County, Kansas
February 12, 2019

Dear Rep. Huebert and Committee Members:

The Board of Commissioners of Butler County stands in support of H.B. 2144, also known as the Community College Taxpayer Transparency Act.

The main goals of H.B. 2144 are to enhance the public transparency, accessibility, and accountability of our Kansas Community Colleges in three areas: 1) budgeting, 2) tuition and fee rates charged to in-district and out-of-district students, and 3) transferability of credits granted by the several Community Colleges in our state. These goals are sensible and desirable.

Transparency, accessibility, and accountability are all core values of the Butler County Commission, and that is why we consistently win awards for budgetary processes and documents that are among the most complete and understandable in Kansas, as well as being readily accessible at our website. In contrast, public access to some of our Community Colleges' budget information is difficult, tedious, or even opaque. This needs to change, especially for something as important to our constituents as higher education.

Of particular concern to Butler County is the fact that local taxes supporting our Community Colleges are currently levied only in the county where each college is located. This places an inequitable burden on taxpayers of the 'host' County. For example, the property tax levied by Butler Community College adds nearly 60% to the tax levied by Butler County itself, while nearly 80% of Butler College students reside outside Butler County. Although out-of-county students pay a modest increment in tuition, the difference is only a fraction of the costs underwritten by Butler County residents, while out-of-county families escape the college mill levy entirely. This tax differential between the host county and neighboring counties retards economic and population growth in the host county, and is unfair to host counties like Butler.

Section 3 of H.B. 2144 takes a valuable first step in rectifying this unfairness by requiring Community Colleges to publish data annually concerning in-district and out-of-district enrollments, tuitions, fees, and scholarships. The resulting increase in public awareness will help bring about long-term solutions to the inequities in Community College funding.

Finally, H.B. 2144 contains provisions, such as those in Section 8, to motivate Community Colleges toward greater fiscal discipline. Some details of such provisions may need refinement. However, in an age of competing demands for funds, greater fiscal discipline is clearly appropriate.

Again, the Board of Commissioners of Butler County stands in support of H.B. 2144.

Sincerely,

Marc Murphy

Marc Murphy, Chairman

Butler County Board of Commissioners

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RESOLUTION NO. 18-09

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR A REDUCTION OF THE BUTLER COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROPERTY TAX LEVY

WHEREAS, Community Colleges in Kansas are regional learning institutions, serving students from a multi-county area; and

WHEREAS, local taxes supporting Community Colleges are currently levied only in the county where each college is located, leading to a disproportionate burden on taxpayers of the 'host' County, who effectively subsidize educational costs of students from nearby counties; and

WHEREAS, the resulting tax differential between Butler County and Sedgwick County impedes economic and population growth in the western portion of Butler County; and

WHEREAS, only 20% of students attending Butler Community College (BCC) reside within Butler County, yet property taxes levied by the BCC Board of Trustees amount to nearly 60% of the property taxes levied by Butler County itself, while only 3% of Butler County residents take BCC classes, and

WHEREAS, property taxes levied by the BCC Board of Trustees on Butler County property owners are hugely disproportionate to the number of semester hours provided by BCC to Butler County residents, compared to the total number of semester hours the college provides, and

WHEREAS, the difference between BCC's out-of-county and in-county rates for tuition and fees has shrunk from nearly 20% just over a decade ago to only about 10% today, thereby exacerbating instead of alleviating the unfair burden placed upon Butler County taxpayers, and

WHEREAS, these and other data relating to both the underlying tax inequities and their possible solutions are currently under public discussion by official boards and citizens in Butler County, and

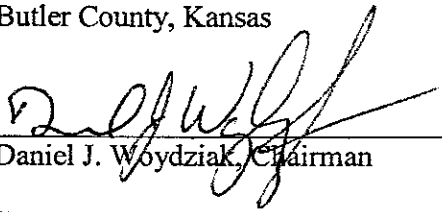
WHEREAS, redressing these inequities will likely require action at the College, County, and State levels,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BUTLER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS,

That the Butler Community College Board of Trustees is hereby invited and encouraged to join the effort to achieve fair funding for BCC and Kansas Community Colleges, both by taking unilateral action to adjust tuition, fee, scope, and program parameters, and by facilitating action at the state level, so as to ensure that local property taxes supporting BCC more closely reflect the actual proportion of college credit hours provided to students from Butler County.

ADOPTED by the BUTLER COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
this 12th day of June, 2018.

Board of Butler County Commissioners
Butler County, Kansas


Daniel J. Woydziak, Chairman

ATTEST:


Tatum Stafford, County Clerk

