



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

House Committee on Appropriations Testimony in Support of HB 2716

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Blake Flanders, Ph.D.
President & CEO, Kansas Board of Regents

Good morning, Chairman Waymaster and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2716 regarding educational benefits for spouses and dependents of deceased, injured or disabled public safety officers and employees and certain deceased, injured or disabled military personnel.

House Bill 2716 would amend K.S.A. 75-4364 to update the definition of spouse, define the term “injured or disabled,” and increase the limit on reimbursements.

As background, under K.S.A. 75-4364 the Board has long administered a tuition waiver program for dependents and spouses of public safety officers and certain military servicemembers who died as a result of injuries sustained while performing duties. In 2021, the statute was amended to expand the benefit for certain dependents and spouses of public safety officers or military servicemembers who were injured or disabled while performing duties. Amendments in HB 2716 would correct what appears to have been an unintended conflict between original language in the statute and the 2021 amendments, updating the definition of spouse to effectuate the legislative intent to make spouses eligible for the benefit if a public safety officer or military servicemember is injured or disabled. Additionally, the definition of “injured or disabled” and other terms are inserted to clarify legislative intent as to the coverage of this benefit and the limit on reimbursements for the program would be increased.

In summary, the amendments in HB 2716 would be quite helpful to our agency in administering the benefit, and provide clarification for public safety officers and military servicemembers that are evaluating whether their dependents and spouses qualify for the benefit.

While it is difficult to determine the precise fiscal impact of the bill, the amendment to the definition of spouse is intended to make more individuals eligible for this program consistent with the legislative intent of the 2021 amendments. Increasing the cap on reimbursements is designed to ensure that the program is fully funded.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

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