



**PROPONENT Testimony on HB 2287
For the Senate Education Committee**

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Matt Lindsey

President, Kansas Independent College Association

Chair Baumgardner and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony related to House Bill 2287, establishing the “Kansas Promise Scholarship.” KICA supports the intent of the bill. We agree with the bill’s sponsors that the State can and should do more to support Kansans pursuing post-secondary credentials in specific, highly relevant fields. Our opinion on HB 2287 mirrors much of our support for the Senate alternative already considered earlier this session (SB 43).

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.

Promise Act Relevance:

KICA institutions awarded 238 associate degrees and 94 certificates last academic year. These are mostly concentrated in a handful of institutions, which are shown at the end of my written testimony. While most Kansas non-profit colleges certainly do not focus on associate’s degrees and certificate programs to the extent that Kansas’ community and technical colleges do, we are proud to be contributors to that important component of educating a talented workforce. We also suspect that many if not all of our associate’s degree and certificate programs would fit within many job fields and pathways that have the “high need” for skilled employees.

We are grateful that the bill ensures that associate’s degree and technical degree programs at accredited non-profit colleges in Kansas are included as eligible programs for students to receive support through the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act in Section 1(b)(1)(D). The definition in that clause aligns with our role in the Kansas higher education landscape, thus ensuring students who choose a non-profit college education can receive support.

We also are grateful that Section 5(a)(2)(B) includes further enrollment in a non-profit postsecondary institution based in Kansas as an option for meeting the requirements of receiving the scholarship, again supporting the choice of recipients of this scholarship to attend a Kansas-based college that fits their aspirations, whether public or non-profit.

Concerns with HB 2287:

While KICA supports the bill, there are two areas where this version could be improved in our evaluation.

- 1) The delegation of authority to determine the ten “high-need” fields to the Board of Regents and Kansas Department of Commerce gives us some pause. This is mostly dealt with in Section 2(c)(4). “High-need” is a poorly defined term – are these:
 - Industries and employers with many vacancies?
 - Industries and employers with great potential for growth?
 - Industries and employers whose value to their community (or the state) are substantial?

The industries could vary widely over time and have the potential for regulatory capture due to inertia. Once an industry is included, voices from both the industry in question and the educational institutions providing that program are both likely to lobby heavily to maintain a spot on the list even if the field no longer fits a definition of “high need.” This leads to failure of the program to meet its aims. KICA prefers the plan originally identified in SB 43 to be more targeted in its approach.

- 2) The community service requirement (primarily addressed in Section 4(b)(1)) is likely to be extremely difficult to assess accurately for small, under-staffed colleges like most of those in the KICA. While we applaud the bill’s emphasis here and recognition of the value of service, the “juice may not be worth the squeeze” to track it and require a specific number of hours. Instead, this creates a bureaucratic step that may limit the bill’s effectiveness in achieving its core aim. We recommend removing this requirement.

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

Data on KICA Institutions:

For the committee’s reference, here are the number of associate’s degrees and certificates awarded by KICA institutions during the 2019-2020 academic year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020). Eight institutions are not listed here as they do not award either type of credential.

Institution	Associate’s	Certificates
Baker University	17	N/A
Barclay College	3	N/A
Central Christian College of Kansas	28	N/A
Cleveland University-Kansas City	17	N/A
Donnelly College	38	42
Hesston College	75	N/A
Manhattan Christian College	10	N/A
MidAmerica Nazarene University	16	32
Newman University	33	N/A
Ottawa University	N/A	14
Southwestern College	N/A	6
University of Saint Mary	1	N/A
TOTAL	238	94