



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Senate Committee on Ways and Means Testimony in Support of HB 2094

March 25, 2021

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President & CEO, Kansas Board of Regents**

Good morning Chairman Billinger and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2094, a bill that expands eligibility to the tuition waiver grant program administered by our agency.

This bill would amend a current statute that established tuition and fee waivers for dependents and spouses of slain public safety officers (i.e. law enforcement officers, firefighters or emergency medical services attendants), military personnel who died in or as a result of military service on or after September 11, 2001, as well as individuals who had been declared prisoners of war after January 1, 1960.

House Bill 2094 adds eligibility for dependents and spouses of public safety officers injured or disabled while performing their duties and dependents and spouses of those entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability of at least 80 percent as a result of injuries or accidents sustained in combat after September 11, 2001. The bill would expand the definition of “public safety employee” to include employees of a law enforcement office, fire department, emergency medical service providers, or state correctional institutions and further add public safety employees to the definition of “public safety officer.”

Kansas public educational institutions, which include state universities, community colleges, technical colleges, and Washburn University as eligible institutions, could file a claim with the Board of Regents for reimbursement of the amount of tuition and fees for eligible students. The bill would cap total reimbursement for tuition reimbursements in any fiscal year at \$350,000. Our agency would coordinate on administrative duties for the program with the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs at no anticipated additional cost.

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We estimate that the expansion of the definition of eligibility would greatly increase the amount of funding needed for this program. The appropriated funding for the current waiver program is \$134,657. For this program to meet its intended demographic, it would be important that it is fully funded at the cap of \$350,000, as we anticipate institutions would see greater enrollment as a result of this bill should it be enacted.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue. We urge your support on this critical issue.