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November 30, 2021

House Special Committee on Education
House Member Kristey Williams – Chair
State Capitol – Room 112-N
Topeka, KS

Dear Chair Williams and Committee:

My name is Mike Gibson, Executive Vice President of Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Kansas. AGC of Kansas is recognized as *the "Chamber of Commerce for the Kansas Construction Industry and represents 300 Kansas construction firms and their 10,000 employees."*

AGC of Kansas is the largest sponsor for the National Center for Construction Education Research (NCCER). AGC's NCCER program is the #1 credentialed training materials for SB 155 vocational funding for Kansas high-schools, community colleges and vocational centers. AGC of Kansas and NCCER partners with 125 Kansas high-schools, community colleges and vocational centers.

Attached please find my testimony for the November 30, 2021 House Special Committee on Education hearing in Topeka.

Thank you for your leadership to the great State of Kansas.

Sincerely,

Mike Gibson
Executive Vice President

Attachment - testimony

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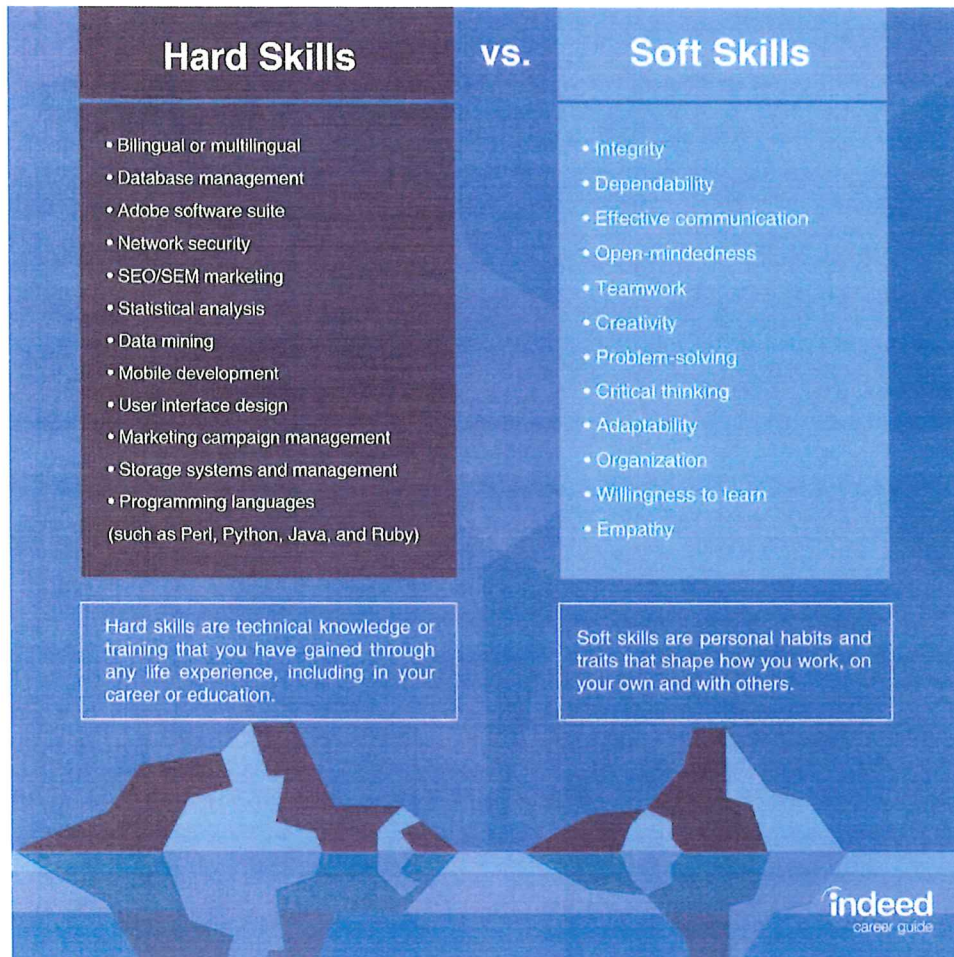
Testimony by Mike Gibson, AGC of Kansas before the House Special Education Committee (11/30/2021)

I come before this distinguished committee to discuss the value of technical training. Technical training not only provides value in employment opportunities for the youth of Kansas but also provides valuable skilled workforce to meet the high demand that exists by business and industry.

80 – 20 Rule

The 80-20 rule comes to mind when looking at technical (or hard) skills versus soft skills training. To put things in perspective, one example of the technical (hard) skills vs. soft skills is in the Indeed graphic below:

- Technical (Hard) Skills are technical knowledge or training that you have gained through any life experience, including in your career or education.
- Soft Skills are personal habits and traits that shape how you work, on your own and with others.



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AGC of Kansas has a great partnership with many of the Kansas vocational schools and works with a large cross section of industries. The "LION SHARE" of business and industry's demand for technical skills continue to be essential in meeting the current and future projections for skill workers.

If you don't believe that, then consider this, for the past decade the Aviation Industry has advertised time and time again for sheet metal workers (technical skills) in order to meet the massive demand for these technical skills to build planes. So much so, that the high-schools, vo-tech centers and community colleges have tailored many of their programs around this demand. The same thing holds true for the energy sector, health care, manufacturing, agriculture and construction in their demand for skilled workers.

Industry seeks candidates with a well-rounded background of technical skills. Candidates that bring these technical skills to the table, will go to the top of the hiring chain. Candidates, admittedly need soft skills to complement their technical skills and industry expects that soft skills training be a part of the K-12 system. But, at the end of the day, technical skills are in higher demand due to the pressures that exist within the baby boom generation retirement phase and the continued growth of the economy.

In closing I will leave you with this, 30-35 years ago, policymakers in Washington D.C. mandated to education to prepare all children to go to college. This mandate resulted in dismantling many technical training programs offered in our community colleges/vocational centers/high-schools.

Over the last decade we all have realized that not all children are interested in enrolling in college or can afford the high costs of enrolling in college. As a result, states have been ramping back up their capacity to deliver technical vocational training. In Kansas (refer to map of AGC/NCCER high-schools, vo-tech centers and community college partnering schools), we continue to see a great public-private partnership for investments in technical training to meet business/industry demand.

Let's learn from the past and understand that "technical skills training" will lead the way to growing our workforce and having a blend of soft skills training will only enhance the technical skills being delivered by our Kansas vocational programs in our high-schools, vo-tech centers and community colleges.

This blend will position Kansas in retaining not only its existing businesses and industries but also position Kansas to attract new business/industry from other states that are seeking a new location due to their state's high taxes/regulations and lack of technical skills within their workforce.