



**House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development
Testimony in Support of HB 2414- Expanding University Engineering Initiative
Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs**

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2414, which expands the University Engineering Initiative

The UEI was first put in place in 2011 after the engineering community stressed the need to increase the number engineers graduating in the state. The Chamber has a diverse membership, including multiple engineering firms of all sizes from across the state. While workforce development remains a top concern across all industries, the Engineering Initiative has shown a strong return on investment for the state as it has achieved the goals set out with its creation 10 years ago.

HB 2414 expands eligibility of the Engineering Initiative to private universities across the state. While this program is exceeding goals for the number of engineering graduates, our engineering firms still have a need for employees. I should add one recommendation from our workforce development report is to tie state residency requirements to programs like the engineering initiative to require graduates to stay in the state for a certain amount of time after graduation.

In closing, we are happy to support House Bill 2414 to continue to build on a successful program which utilizes the strong engineering programs at our state's universities. It is vital that we continue to train the future workforce and match employment needs of Kansas engineering companies. Thank you for the opportunity to support House Bill 2414 and I am happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.