

Senate Education Committee
February 7, 2012

Chairman Schodorf and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Career and Technical Education initiative recently introduced in Senate Bill 361. My name is Diane DeBacker and I am Commissioner of Education for the State of Kansas. I am speaking on behalf of the present and future 450,000+ students in Kansas K-12 public education.

The State of Kansas adopted the National Career Clusters model of 16 career clusters and has been working with the Kansas Career and Technical Education Advisory Council for the past few years in developing 31 pathways within these clusters. Secondary schools in Kansas have worked diligently to redesign their former vocational education programs to meet the requirements of the career clusters. The career clusters reflect the significant technological advances made in the areas of technical education over the past decade. Tomorrow's jobs will require more knowledge, better skills, and highly flexible workers. Our goal in moving to the Career Clusters was to provide students with relevant contexts for learning through pathways to college and career readiness.

The Career and Technical Education initiative announced by Governor Brownback on January 9 and reflected in Senate Bill 361 aligns closely with the State Department of Education's work on the Career Clusters and the State Board of Education's focus on Career and Technical Education over the past few years. Providing a seamless pathway for students to earn an industry-recognized credential prior to high school graduation, or at least be well on their way to a credential when they graduate, is a goal that we've been working toward at the State Department of Education. We've worked with postsecondary institutions across the state to develop statewide articulation agreements and as of February 1, 2012, we have a total of 41 agreements with seven institutions. Part of the Career and Technical Education initiative is to have one statewide articulation agreement which essentially means that any credits earned in an approved Career and Technical Education program in high school will transfer to any postsecondary institution in Kansas. While this may not sound like a big deal, believe me, it's a giant leap forward and will greatly benefit students.

We are pleased that the initiative will maintain the current amount of money, roughly \$29 million, that goes to secondary technical education programs (also known as vocational education). Our secondary programs are strong and healthy. Our secondary educators, along with their advisory councils, have worked diligently over the past few years to move from the

former vocational programs to the Career Clusters model. Our technical education teachers have invested thousands of hours of professional development to ensure that they are up-to-date in their specific industry and are creating educational experiences that will prepare their students for today and tomorrow's jobs.

As a member of the Postsecondary Technical Education Advisory Council, we've worked over the past few years to create seamless pathways for students as they move from one level of education to the next. The Career and Technical Education initiative will allow us to more quickly further our efforts for students to be career and college ready as they graduate from high school. Maintaining the secondary funding, providing for student tuition at the post-secondary level, ensuring that transportation costs are covered, setting aside money for marketing career and technical education, and providing monetary incentives for high schools that increase the number of students earning an industry-recognized credential in key occupations all provide for a win-win for our students and for the Kansas economy.

The Kansas State Department of Education encourages the Legislature to support the Career and Technical Education initiative. This is an opportunity for Kansas students that may not come along again for many years. Kansas students will benefit from this initiative. The Kansas economy will benefit from this initiative. Granted there are a few details to be ironed out, such as the 30-mile rule, but I'm confident these can be overcome by the hard work and dedication of Kansas educators, both secondary and post-secondary.

Thank you.