

House Education Committee
Wednesday, February 9, 2017

Chairman Aurand and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you this afternoon regarding HB 2212 regarding the Postsecondary Technical Education Authority. My name is Greg Nichols, President of Salina Technical College.

I am here today on behalf of the Kansas Association of Technical Colleges (KATC). We are a seven college consortium promoting career and technical education in Kansas. We provide high demand, business driven technical education to our students. Our focus is workforce development and supplying business and industry with the employees they need to succeed.

I want to start by thanking you for the legislatures support and recognition of technical education and workforce development in Kansas. The emphasis on Career and Technical Education by the Kansas Legislature and the Governor has brought positive attention to the tremendous opportunities in technical education and the needs of employers for a skilled and prepared workforce. It has also dramatically demonstrated that the *return on investment* in technical education is unrivaled by any other educational sector. Your continued investment in technical education provides Kansan's with a path to a skillset that enhances their employability with training in high demand areas, allows them to work at a living wage and to even pursue further education if they choose while helping to hold down student loan debt. Technical education provides Kansan citizens the skills needed for a prosperous future and Kansas companies with a trained workforce needed to grow their businesses.

Technical education in Kansas is at a point where we can thrive or die on the vine. Is education at an economical point of diminishing returns? Every business must decide at what point to adjust the model and extend its product life. For higher education, technical education is what will extend the product life. The Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority (TEA) was established by the Kansas Legislature in 2007. Your legislative predecessors, or perhaps even you yourself, created the functions of TEA under the auspices of the Kansas Board of Regents to make recommendations to the Regents regarding the coordination, statewide planning and improvements/enhancements to the postsecondary technical education system. The 12 appointed members represent the visionary leaders from among Kansas, whose vision is for Kansas to be a national leader of premier technical education by developing a highly prepared workforce. The technical

programs available at Kansas Community and Technical Colleges stand as shining examples of this vision.

Who are the most productive and efficient colleges, the metrics indicate those with technical programs. Technical colleges lead the state in graduation, completion, and employment rates year after year. The community colleges with technical programs are consistently measured on the same metrics and their technically-trained students achieve at the highest rates among their institutions. The TEA is solely focused on the most successful educational program that touches every part of Kansas.

The TEA has strategic priorities that help meet the mission: Drive the advancement of a robust technical education system to meet the needs of Kansas business and industry. Those priorities are:

- Aligning Education with Business and Industry
- Aligning Educational Offerings within the System
- Enhancing System Participation
- Enhancing Funding for Technical Education
- Enhancing Legislation and Policy for System Growth
- Evaluating and Measuring System Effectiveness
- Develop Benchmarks and Accountability Standards

To meet the goals outlined in the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) Foresight 2020 publication, technical education must be the number one priority in Kansas. The extension of the TEA will ensure that future Kansas business and industry will have the workforce necessary to build infrastructure, manufacture goods, and provide technical service to the citizens of Kansas.

The TEA is performing the duties assigned to it effectively and efficiently. Members of the KBOR staff work directly with the authority to align programs whenever possible. Collaboration is essential for efficient use of public resources. TEA is at the forefront of collaborative efforts. Moreover, recent trends in public finance have called on higher education partnerships with civic and private institutions. The TEA has encouraged such partnerships and served to promote the entrepreneurial spirit that brought the settlers into the state many years ago. TEA has blocked programs where unnecessary duplication would saturate the higher education market and has allowed competition when the public good is better served. The authority members come from



diverse parts of our state and bring a perspective that, frankly, higher education leaders need to hear.

It is important to know that the Board of Regents is a coordinating body for the two year institutions and a governing body for the universities. What that means is that every college has the authority to stand up any program that they want K.S.A 71-201(b)3, subject to prior approval. The TEA is solely focused on the needs of technical education. Continuing the TEA would ensure that technical education programs would be scrutinized by members who understand business and industry. Eliminating the TEA would place the onus on the Board of Regents directly and would serve to overwhelm their governing processes over the universities. Though the TEA is not a final say in the coordination process and governance, it serves to provide specific assistance to the Board of Regents on technical education issues.

Just this week I presented at a Career and Technical Education conference in Manhattan on working with school districts to provide a smoother transition from high school to college. The KSDE is promoting technical education as a pathway for the future of many Kansans. There is momentum to achieve the statewide goal of 60% degree, certificate attainment that is sought in Foresight 2020. The collaborative effort of KSDE, KBOR, USDs, and Technical and Community Colleges can make the dream a reality.

The Kansas Association of Technical Colleges asks that you continue this successful board to provide a strong voice for technical education in Kansas. As President of Salina Tech, I ask that you continue the TEA for the benefit of our students.

