

REAP | Regional Economic Area Partnership

February 16, 2017

RE: SB 174 WATC/WSU Affiliation

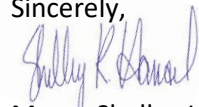
Chairman Sen. McGinn, Vice Chair Sen. Billinger, Ranking Member Sen. Laura Kelly, and other honorable members of the Kansas Senate Committee Ways and Means:

The Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP), is a council of local governments, comprised of 26 city and county governments in nine counties of South Central Kansas. These jurisdictions voluntarily come together to take joint actions, to advocate for state investments, and encourage strategic public policies to grow the regional economy. The members of REAP focus on issues of common concerns that drive job growth and business development including education and skills training, water, transportation, and energy.

Recognizing the regional impact of Wichita Area Technical College (WATC) and Wichita State University (WSU), REAP is pleased to support SB 174. The formal affiliation between WATC and WSU will increase educational opportunities, help fulfill the workforce needs of south central Kansas, and create a stronger partnership between higher education and industry. This measure, among other things, would benefit and offer more services to students and expanded training opportunities to the local business community. The region is home to Butler Community College, Cowley College, Hutchinson Community College, and many private 4 year colleges who all communicate and partner to provide excellent educational opportunities. The recent successful sales tax vote in Sumner County to build a Cowley College campus is one of many examples of the commitment to businesses to develop a high quality workforce in the region. The affiliation through SB 174 would strengthen the existing partnerships of the two intuitions and serve as a catalyst for economic growth to South Central Kansas.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Mayor Shelley Hansel, Wellington
REAP Chair