



Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 16

House K-12 Education Budget Committee

March 18, 2019

Chuck Knapp, President and CEO
Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Chuck Knapp. I am President and CEO of Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 16 and the goal of funding programs that work. We testified in support of the bill before the Senate Education Committee.

Senate Bill 16 is a simple bill that makes it clear "at-risk" funding may be used to support evidence-based programs with measurable successful outcomes that help students facing various barriers to success graduate from high school. JAG-K is certainly one of those programs. With a 98% graduation rate over the last two years and never below 91% since our inception in 2013, JAG-K has demonstrated consistent positive outcomes working with students who are generally in the bottom 50% of class rank.

The evidence-based and highly researched JAG model that was developed in 1979 identifies multiple barriers to success, and each student must have a minimum of five of these barriers to qualify for the program. Most students who qualify for free and reduced lunch would probably qualify for the JAG-K program, but 28 percent of our students who do not qualify for free and reduced lunch are also "at-risk." Schools do not receive extra weighting for those students, so we would also support additional targeted money for at-risk programming in the State K-12 education budget.

SB 16 does not appropriate any funds and has no current fiscal impact. It is an important tool for the Legislature to have in order to ensure public schools and Kansas students have the best resources available to them with an appropriate funding source.

This is especially timely given a recent conversation I had with Interim Secretary of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) Laura Howard. Secretary Howard informed us that

the agency is undergoing a review of all programs funded by TANF and cannot guarantee our grant will be continued. I appreciate the Secretary's transparency and review of how tax dollars are spent. TANF funding represents 93 percent of JAG-K's revenue and a loss of that funding would force us to cease operations if not given ample notice in securing other funding sources. As a reminder, this is only the sixth year of existence for JAG-K, and just a few years ago, TANF was 100% of JAG-K's revenue. We have made progress in diversifying our funding. In the past, DCF encouraged JAG-K to seek increased TANF funding because we have such strong outcomes and have positively impacted the lives of thousands of Kansas students considered "at-risk." The return on investment in helping prevent poverty has been a wise investment of federal funds. We believe that is also one of the reasons we have had such strong bipartisan support in the Legislature.

Using TANF to fund a JAG program is not unique to Kansas. Governors of both political parties use TANF funds, including two of our largest state affiliates Louisiana and Indiana. It should also be noted that a majority of JAG affiliates also receive state funding.

A mix of federal, state, local and private funds is JAG-K's best long-term funding solution. We are hopeful DCF will continue to offer TANF as a federal funding source and that the Legislature will support Senate Bill 16 as a way to use state funding for JAG-K and other evidence-based programs with a history of proven outcomes.

Finally, JAG-K was specifically listed in Senate Bill 16, but it is not exclusionary language. Communities in Schools was already included in statute, and the Senate Education Committee added Boys and Girls Club. We supported that amendment and know there are several other very good programs that serve "at-risk" students.

Thank you for the opportunity to stand in support of Senate Bill 16.