



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Senate Committee on Education Testimony in Support of HB 2515

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Good afternoon Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and present testimony in support of the Promise Scholarship Act.

HB 2515 would offer Kansans the opportunity to attend a postsecondary institution in pursuit of a technical certificate or an associate degree. Our agency would identify the top ten job fields that currently have the highest need for skilled employees and awards would be directed to students in programs leading to employment in those fields.

This program is quite similar to our Career Technical Workforce Grant available to students enrolled in programs of study for a high cost, high demand, or critical industry field. The Board of Regents has available an appropriation of \$114,075 and preference goes to applicants with financial need. For the 2018-2019 academic year, out of 625 initial applicants 208 awards were made with an average award of \$841.

We agree that any new program should address workforce needs for high demand fields but would encourage you to also take into consideration the potential wages of the graduates and evolving requirements of employers. Nursing is the prime example of this evolution—this field is unique among healthcare professions in that there are multiple educational pathways leading to an entry-level license to practice. Over time, however, the labor market has shifted to those holding a BSN. HB 2515 would not address financial aid for students seeking the BSN.

We know that one of the most important outcomes of the Kansas postsecondary education system is employment of our system's graduates. We also know that our state's employers are struggling to locate qualified employees. In this record-breaking period of economic expansion, the tight labor market is clearly impacting workforce recruitment. We believe our System has solutions, both for generating talent and also in offering specialized workforce training solutions. When you put forth the call to generate more nurses and more engineers, our System successfully leveraged targeted state appropriations into program graduates. HB 2515 could be another successful workforce story for our state.

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The Center on Education and the Workforce published a workforce report on “Good Jobs That Pay Without a BA¹” and included a state-by-state analysis. Although the trends vary across states, they found that the level of education matters in getting one of those good jobs. As the nation’s economy has shifted, high school graduates’ share of good jobs has declined in nearly every state, including Kansas.

We are pleased that the Legislature is considering an expansion of the state’s investment in student financial aid. Student financial aid awards in Kansas have not kept pace with surrounding states. The regional average for student financial aid per full-time equivalent (FTE) student is **\$334** for 2018, while Kansas has only **\$91** per FTE student.²

Total Aid Awarded by State (Dollars in Millions)



Source: National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), 48th Annual Survey, 2017-18.

The Board of Regents sees this legislation as a complement to our Kansas Access Partnership and we are eager to work with you on how best to promote postsecondary pathways for Kansans and develop our state’s workforce to meet the needs of our state’s employers.

Regarding the amended bill, we suggest that you consider the policy of allowing students entering into a Promise Scholarship Agreement to attend on a part-time basis. We know that to attract working adults back to higher education, part-time attendance can be key so they can continue to support themselves and their families.

As a technical issue, we request that you amend line 16 of page one so that reference to the Higher Learning Commission is replaced with “a nationally recognized accrediting agency for higher education in the United States.” This change is necessary for compliance with a new federal regulation governing the recognition of accrediting agencies within the federal Higher Education Act³.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill. I am happy to stand for questions.

¹ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *Good Jobs That Pay without a BA: A State-by-State Analysis*, 2017, <https://GoodjobsData.org>.

² State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, *State Higher Education Finance Report, 2018*, <https://sheeo.org/project/state-higher-education-finance/>.

³ <https://federalregister.gov/d/2019-23129>