



## TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2085

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Kansas Senate Committee on Education

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Steven Greene II  
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chairman Baumgardner and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 2085. My name is Steve Greene, and I represent Opportunity Solutions Project. OSP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that seeks to enhance individuals' paths to self-sufficiency.

This bill helps Kansas address a growing problem in the United States. As of September, student debt totaled more than \$1.7 trillion dollars, equivalent to roughly eight percent of the nation's GDP.<sup>i</sup> <sup>ii</sup> The average Kansan's student debt, specifically, totals more than \$31,000.<sup>iii</sup> Until presidential and congressional action that artificially reduced default rates on student debt, it was the defaulted on more commonly than any other kind of personal debt.<sup>iv</sup> Accrual of student debt is, at times, an unavoidable cost of attaining a degree, but can also be the result of a simple lack of awareness of personal finance, economics, and a failure to plan ahead.

House Bill 2085 would help young Kansas students by increasing access to important information on the cost of college, other training opportunities, and potential earnings data. Rather than merely existing out on the internet, where a student may or may not find it, this information will be delivered directly to its intended audience. It is smart, it is practical, and it is necessary.

The issues of rising costs of education, student debt, career planning, and workforce development are not merely a professional matter for me. They are a personal one, too. The youngest of four from a working-class family, the family's assumption was that I would go to college after high school, even though I not only had no plan—I had no semblance of one. "College is how you succeed in America now. Figure it out when you get there" is not good enough. Students can take on tens of thousands of dollars of loans with little more than a signature, without any real idea of how to pay off that loan. Many eventually struggle, particularly those who do not graduate in a timely manner, or those who do not graduate at all.

There are a multitude of opportunities available to young people, and there are ways to optimize the education experience and keep costs as low as possible. They just need to know about them. There are also opportunities outside the four-year, bachelor's degree process. With the cost of college growing at a rate almost eight times faster than wages, now is as appropriate a time as any to explore those options.<sup>v</sup>

OSP applauds the work the Kansas Board of Regents does to make the cost of education more transparent and provide young Kansans with much of the information they need to plan and decide their future. This bill will help get that information into the hands of people who need it and can use it. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> Federal Reserve, G.19 Report, Nov. 2020. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/current/default.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Gross Domestic Product (Third Estimate), Corporate Profits (Revised), and GDP by Industry, Third Quarter 2020," <https://www.bea.gov/news/2020/gross-domestic-product-third-estimate-corporate-profits-revised-and-gdp-industry-third>

<sup>iii</sup> Vince Tabarracci, "States With the Most Student Loan Debt," [smartestdollar.com](https://smartestdollar.com/research/states-with-most-student-loan-debt) (2021). <https://smartestdollar.com/research/states-with-most-student-loan-debt>

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>v</sup> Camilo Maldonado, "Price Of College Increasing Almost 8 Times Faster Than Wages," forbes.com (2018). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/camilomaldonado/2018/07/24/price-of-college-increasing-almost-8-times-faster-than-wages/?sh=475a6e4466c1>