



Kansas Independent
College Association

**Testimony for the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
March 14, 2013
Matt Lindsey, President
Kansas Independent College Association**

Chairman Ostmeyer and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you and explain why Kansas' independent colleges are opposed to Senate Bill 186. I am Matt Lindsey, president of the Kansas Independent College Association, representing the eighteen independent colleges of Kansas, all of whom are not-for-profit institutions of higher education, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

The Kansas Independent College Association and its members object to Senate Bill 186. We do so for two primary reasons:

- 1) SB 186 infringes on the long-standing independence and local control of our private, not-for-profit colleges and overrides the ability of private organizations to decide what is in the best interests of their constituents.**
- 2) SB 186 forces our private colleges to make a choice among three bad options that either requires us to a) spend millions of dollars on new gun security infrastructure; b) spend millions of dollars on increased insurance premiums; or c) allow guns into our classrooms and create a dangerous learning environment.**

Kansas' Independent Colleges:

Kansas' 18 independent colleges and universities serve 24,572 total students as of Fall 2012. Kansas' independent colleges award nearly 25% of the state's bachelor's degrees each year, and nearly 30% of the master's degrees. Last year, we graduated 26% of the state's nurses and 23% of the state's teachers. Our colleges are vibrant, student-centered, entrepreneurially-minded, and focused on providing personal attention to each student who walks in our halls. That may be why 71% of our graduates finish in four years, a fact we are proud of just like we're proud of the high proportion of our graduates who stay in Kansas, raise a family, and become productive members of their community.

We also provide this education affordably. Our average tuition and fees are just over \$20,000 per year, well below the national average for private colleges. The rate at which we have increased tuition has been less than that of public colleges in Kansas nearly every year since 2002. We are able to keep this affordable for students by collectively offering \$110 million in institutional grants and scholarships to our students, an amount that is far larger than the sum of student aid provided through state and federal sources. While budgets are tight for everyone, our commitment to institutional aid remains strong.

Moreover, our colleges, while generally smaller individually than our public university brethren, are critical players in the state's economy, both today and in the years to come. The operating budgets of our colleges ripple out into the local economy, and our colleges are often located in smaller towns throughout the state like Hillsboro, Lindsborg, Ottawa, and Sterling. We estimate that our colleges contribute \$1.25 billion to the Kansas economy.

I would be remiss if I did not also point out the critical emphasis our colleges and universities place on character, values, and faith. While not every one of our member institutions is still officially affiliated with a specific Christian denomination like they were at their founding, we believe strongly in the influence that those traditions have on our approach and that the highest quality postsecondary education comes when we help our students explore the role those values play in their own lives.

I include these facts and observations to make an important point: our colleges are an essential part of the broad spectrum of Kansas' postsecondary educational system. While we are not regulated by the Kansas Board of Regents, we remain deeply committed to a shared vision that Kansas will thrive economically and civically if every Kansan has access to a high-quality postsecondary education that fits that individual student's abilities, interests, and learning styles.

- 1) SB 186 infringes on the long-standing independence and local control of our private, not-for-profit colleges, a status which yields highly positive postsecondary outcomes.**

Our objections to SB 186 flow in no small part from our strong concern about the disrespect this bill shows the independent status of our not-for-profit institutions. Many of our colleges are central parts of broader faith communities and all of them are highly committed to placing control of their college policies in the hands of local decision-makers and their own college boards. This independence has always been a defining characteristic of our colleges and a central piece of why we believe we have been so successful.

We mean no disrespect to this committee of the elected representatives in Topeka, but our college boards and our faith communities know what is best for their individual institutions. That is the point of having *private* colleges in the first place, to harness the power of that independence and local control for better outcomes.

Yet SB 186 takes a large leap toward substantially abridging that local control and independence. Furthermore, given the faith-orientation of many of our institutions, SB 186 also quite clearly imposes the judgment of the legislature on what should or should not be permitted within our chapels and churches. We in the KICA are not in any way comfortable with this precedent and sincerely hope this is not the road the Legislature wishes to travel further in the future.

2) SB 186 forces our private colleges to make a choice among three very dangerous and undesirable options:

The Kansas Independent Colleges are also concerned about the practical impact of SB 186. Section 3 forces our institutions to choose among three alternatives, all of which would degrade our ability to provide affordable high-quality postsecondary education. Each of those three alternatives creates either a mandate for an impossible investment in infrastructure or compromises our ability to provide a safe learning environment for our students.

The first option identified in Section 3 of SB 186 is to prohibit concealed weapons and provide signage and “adequate security measures” for the main public entrance of every building and facility. Just counting the main residential campuses for our 18 independent colleges, there are 434 individual buildings and facilities that would require investment in “adequate security

measures.” These include academic buildings, residence halls, cafeterias, libraries, and athletic facilities as well as a host of other support and multi-use buildings.

Providing “adequate security measures” for one entrance at each of these buildings would be unbearably expensive to our private colleges. SB 186 defines these measures to include electronic equipment to detect and restrict carrying of any weapons into the building, such as walk-through metal detectors or metal detector wands and mechanisms to store and secure lawfully carried weapons, such as gun lockers. Furthermore, though the bill does not specify anything regarding security personnel, providing adequate security would doubtless require investment in additional and better trained campus safety personnel.

When the state of Arizona was considering similar legislation last February, the colleges and universities of Arizona and the Arizona Republic newspaper conducted a study that showed it would cost nearly \$5,000 per door in one-time costs just to provide the detectors and gun lockers expected in the “adequate security” definition.¹ Thus, for our colleges, the total costs of compliance would be almost \$2.2 million, just in upfront costs. The price of training additional safety officers would push this price tag even higher. As a point of comparison, \$2.2 million would support full scholarships for 125 more students to attend our colleges.

Our private colleges and universities do not have \$2.2 million stashed away to make this investment demanded by SB 186. Clearly if we would, we would be making even more institutional investment to make attendance more affordable than it already is. In fact, demanding that we invest \$2.2 million will only serve to put us in a position where we would have to *raise* tuition and fees on students in order to survive. We do not believe that is in the best interests of Kansas and its citizens and cannot be the intent of this Legislature.

The second choice before us is to prohibit concealed weapons but not to spend \$2.2 million on metal detectors and gun lockers for every building on our campuses. But Section 3 of SB 186 would then impose on us an increased legal liability for any “wrongful act or omission relating to actions of persons licensed to carry a concealed handgun concerning acts or omissions regarding

¹ Anne Ryman, “Arizona Universities Estimate Costs of Campus Guns Bill,” *Arizona Republic*, 29 February 2012.

such handguns.” This too presents a fiscal burden than would be impossible for our institutions to bear, perhaps even worse than the costs of compliance. The increased liability would force our insurers to raise our premiums between 15 and 20 percent, according to some insurance industry experts.² That translates to several hundred thousand dollars per year for each institution, perhaps in the neighborhood of \$4.5 million across our entire association. This too would push tuition rates up even higher because our colleges do not have this level of budget flexibility. Of course, if I was a trial lawyer, I would be enamored of the conditions set up by this bill.

Given our financial inability to comply with SB 186 or withstand the liability insurance costs that would come with the alternative road, the only other choice SB 186 allows us is to permit concealed weapons to be carried on our campus and in every building and facility. Yet, this is the most dangerous and threatening of all three options.

There is near unanimity among students, faculty, and administrators at colleges across the U.S. that allowing concealed weapons would make campus far *less* safe. Few if anyone in the higher education community of any ideology thinks that 21 and 22 year old college students in close quarters and surrounded by the types of pressures that colleges students face are the right group of individuals to encourage concealed carrying of firearms. And local law enforcement officers, with whom our campuses have strong and positive relationships, believe allowing concealed carry on campus would make their jobs much more difficult and dangerous.

Moreover, how would college personnel and campus security officers verify that someone who walks on to campus or into a campus facility carrying a weapon is indeed authorized to carry a concealed weapon? Would it not be more prudent for anyone who observed that individual to first assume that we have an active shooter on campus? I shudder at the image of the confusion and panic this sort of policy could create on a regular basis and this bill mandates the creation of an environment that will certainly create such confusion.

² Christopher Gonzales, “Guns on Campus Could Costs Colleges,” *Texas Tribune*, 27 April 2011.

In sum, the Kansas independent colleges strongly oppose Senate Bill 186 because it flies in the face of long-standing and successful respect for our local college boards to make wise decisions that serve the needs of our students and it forces upon us an unwinnable, unmanageable, and unaffordable set of choices. The bill as written will do great harm to our students and not improve their safety and security in any way. We encourage the committee members to vote against its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have now or in written correspondence as the Committee deems helpful.

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