

**Kansas Department of Commerce
Neutral Testimony on HB 2506
David Soffer, Legislative & Policy Director
Prepared for House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
February 13, 2020, 1:30 p.m.**

The Kansas Department of Commerce would like to testify as neutral on HB 2506. This bill would grant occupational licensing reciprocity in the State of Kansas.

Throughout the years, Occupational Licensing has grown rapidly. It is currently estimated that 25% of all Americans rely on a license for employment¹. As each state has developed its own set of guidelines for each license, transferability of licensing has become expensive and time consuming unless a reciprocity program exists.

A significant finding in the Framework for Growth, which you heard about on Tuesday, was the short and long-term impacts of a shrinking talent pool in Kansas. Our working age population decline is more rapid than the US trend and the trendlines in peer states. Our overall outmigration is also worse and we are losing our more highly educated citizens. Currently, Kansas' working population ranked 40th nationally in 2018 and is projected to decline 2.3% by 2028. From 2016 to 2018, Kansas lost over 9,000 residents with bachelor's degrees or higher and in 2018 the state ranked 39th in its retention of graduates.

We must begin to address these gaps by making the most of our state's untapped potential by integrating our talent, that may either already exist in our state and others that are potentially seeking to make Kansas their home. One way to make progress is easing requirements on transferable occupational licensing, especially for high demand jobs such as teachers or nurses. This also includes easing requirements on license reciprocity for our military spouses, a top priority of the Kelly administration. By doing this, we will help make our State more attractive to prospective residents.

The reason the Department of Commerce is neutral on this bill, is we have heard there are concerns from boards and other agencies with some of the language on implementation. Since the Department does not issue any licenses, we feel it would be inappropriate to address these concerns. We appreciate Rep. Croft bringing this important issue to light. Our ask is for the sponsor and the committee to work with those agencies and boards to address any specific concerns they might have.

¹ https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/employ/Licensing/State_Occupational_Licensing.pdf