



Kansas Community College Testimony in Support of HB 2515 the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of HB 2515, the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act. The Kansas Promise Scholarship Act is not just another scholarship program but will be a new innovative economic development tool addressing the most pressing challenge facing Kansas businesses, a skilled workforce shortage.

The Kansas Promise Scholarship Act will be a “last dollar” program targeted to the most in-demand fields in the state increasing access to community and technical college education for Kansas high school graduates. Additionally, this Act is a targeted economic development tool focusing these scholarship dollars on jobs within the Kansas economy which are in the highest demand to help companies meet the talent needs they have today and in the future. This program will be limited to Kansas high school graduates, require those graduates to complete 200 hours of community services to help “repay the investment” they receive through these scholarships, and then of critical importance is the requirement that the student reside in Kansas two years post certificate or associates degree completion. Kansas Community Colleges believe the residency portion of the bill will help not only retain population in the state of Kansas, but will also help Kansas companies to have the best chance at hiring this top quality talent, and will be an extremely effective rural revitalization tool.

As a last dollar program this Act may not be as expensive as one may think. This program would only kick in after all other scholarship and Pell grant dollars are applied to the student’s tuition, fees, and textbook obligations. The bill as introduced directs the Kansas Board of Regents to work with the Department of Commerce and business and industry to determine which fields in the Kansas economy are most in demand. Just as our 19 community colleges have different programs to meet the needs of local employers, we encourage careful attention to this provision of the bill to ensure that both statewide needs as well as regional workforce demand needs are taken into consideration when determining eligible program areas. The workforce needs in Southwest Kansas differ from the needs of Northeast Kansas. To ensure the continued viability of the workforce in all areas of our state what programs are determined as high demand is a critical piece of this act.

While this great idea may be new to Kansas it is not a new concept across the United States. At least 16 other states have programs with some similar components (Tennessee, Florida, Maryland, New York, Hawaii, Oregon, Rhode Island, Montana, Minnesota, Kentucky, Arkansas, Nevada, West Virginia, Indiana, and Washington.) Kansas Community Colleges stand ready to assist in anyway possible in implementing this bill and delivering the workforce training/education needed to ensure Kansas businesses have the talent they need to be successful. Other states having similar programs puts them ahead of Kansas in terms of workforce. This act will ensure that the talent pool we are producing will allow Kansas companies to expand and companies outside of Kansas to be attracted to the state to begin operations. There are many details to be worked out to successfully implement this program. However, Kansas Community Colleges will work with the Technical Colleges, Kansas Board of Regents, business and industry, and other key stakeholders to do what is needed to make this successful and anticipate any administrative hurdles.

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For example, the average Pell award for Kansas Community College students is \$3,500. The average tuition and fees is \$1,700. Even if you add another \$500 for books/materials that would be \$2,200 in student costs. Therefore, they would not utilize this program because they would still have some Pell funds left for housing and no tuition, fee, book/material expense left. Over, 44% of KS Community College students receive Pell so this will help the lower middle class students whose parents make a little too much to qualify for Pell.