



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

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of 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 as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, a skilled workforce shortage.

The Kansas Promise Scholarship Act will be a “last dollar” program. It targets to the most in-demand occupation fields in the state (Information Technology and Security, Physical and Mental Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, and Building Trades) increasing access to community and technical college education for Kansas high school graduates and adults who have lived in Kansas at least three years and need to re-skill or up-skill. 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. To help “repay the investment” students receive through these scholarships the student recipients will be required to reside and work in Kansas two years post certificate, Associate’s degree completion, or upon completion of a higher degree. Kansas Community Colleges believe the residency portion of the bill will not only help retain population in the state of Kansas but will provide Kansas companies the best chance at hiring this top-quality talent. The Kansas Promise Act will also 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/material obligations. For example, the average Pell award for Kansas Community College students per semester is \$3,620. The average Kansas Community College resident tuition and fees per semester is \$1,780. Even if you add another \$500 per semester for books/materials that would be \$2,280 per semester in student costs. Therefore, tuition, fees, books/materials would be paid in full by the Pell grant and the student would have funds remaining to be applied to housing. In this example, the student would not utilize the Kansas Promise Act because their other financial aid covered all their tuition, fee, book/material costs. Over, 44% of Kansas Community College students receive Pell grants. The Kansas Promise Act will help the lower middle-class students whose parents make a little too much to qualify for Pell but are unable to pay for their child’s education requiring them to take on student loans. Included in the bill is a provision which will allow for claw-back of the scholarship funds through either the state set-off program or collections companies to ensure students who receive this scholarship uphold the two-year living and working requirements.

A bill similar to this one passed the House and Senate with overwhelming majorities last session and was vetoed by the Governor. The reason stated in the veto message was because of the bills cost and the economic uncertainty that existed as the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning. 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 any way 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 provides them an advantage in terms of workforce development over the state of Kansas. 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 which will need to be established in rules and regulations by the Kansas Board of Regents. However, Kansas Community Colleges will work with the Technical Colleges, the Kansas Board of Regents, business and industry, and other key stakeholders to do what is needed to make this successful and overcome any administrative hurdles.

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