



TO: House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

FROM: Jaron Caffrey, Director of Workforce and Health Care Policy
Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Affairs

DATE: February 13, 2025

RE: House Bill 2339 - Proponent

The Kansas Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of House Bill 2339.

The Kansas Hospital Association's annual vacancy and turnover survey has indicated that the shortage of health care employees in Kansas in 2023 is nearly double what it was just four years prior (13% in 2023 compared to 7% in 2019). Health care organizations are actively engaged in numerous efforts to improve recruitment and retention to mitigate the workforce challenges we face, but there are a few key elements that can be addressed in legislation to bridge gaps related to schools of nursing in particular. We support efforts to establish minimum education levels for instructors at nursing schools and the provision to enable part-time nursing students to receive a prorated scholarship amount of the Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship Program. That is why we are pleased to support House Bill 2339.

The vacancy rate of Registered Nurses in Kansas was 15% in 2023 and was 19% for Licensed Practical Nurses. This is drastically higher than "normal" years before the pandemic when RN and LPN vacancy rates were 5% and 10% respectively, according to the 2024 Kansas Health Care Workforce Report. It is crucial that our schools of nursing throughout Kansas are well equipped to meet the needs of students today to enroll, retain, and graduate as many well-trained nurses as possible.

With schools of nursing looking to develop additional pathways to enable learners to pursue their nursing degree, including for students that may not be able to commit to a full-time courseload, we must ensure that service scholarships like the Kansas Nursing Service Scholarship Program, are modernized to accommodate these part-time learners so they are not at a disadvantage or disincentive to pursue their nursing education. This legislation contains common-sense statutory updates to ensure that part-time students in nursing programs can receive a scholarship to help fund their nursing education and then agree to serve in Kansas for a minimum number of years following their graduation.

We also appreciate that House Bill 2339 sets a standard that nurse faculty must have a degree that is at least one level more advanced than the degree awarded by the program in which they are teaching, and that additional credentials for faculty shall not be required. Many schools of nursing throughout Kansas struggle with hiring faculty in their programs to fully staff them. When schools of nursing lack faculty, they often are required to admit fewer students than the Kansas Board of Nursing approves them for, which means we are not graduating the number of nurses that we otherwise could and should. We believe providing these guidelines of faculty requirements can help schools of nursing when recruiting faculty but recognize enhancements to the Kansas Nursing Initiative Grant Program are also an important related issue the legislature should pass into law that can truly maximize the effectiveness of reforms to assist schools of nursing in being well-equipped for success.

This is a step in the right direction to help build the supply of our workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.