

**Testimony on HB2530
Submitted to the House Education Committee
January 26, 2027**

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in support, with qualifications, of HB2530. We appreciate the Committee's focus on measures that proactively invest in the future success of Kansas students and the vitality of our state's workforce.

As you might know, Topeka USD 501, along with many other school districts across the state, offers significant and noteworthy Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. These programs are not merely electives; they are robust pathways designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and certifications necessary for success in high-demand, high-wage careers. There is a deep and growing recognition by school districts that providing clear, viable options for "life after high school"—whether that be immediate entry into the workforce, specialized technical training, or pursuit of a college degree—is a moral imperative for students and an economic necessity for the state.

Topeka Public Schools - USD 501 currently uses a recommendation contained in HB2530's central provision; administering a career readiness assessment to students before graduation. We utilize the ACT WorkKeys assessment. This is viewed as a crucial and proactive "investment" in USD 501 students' future. These assessments serve as powerful diagnostic and guidance tools. It is primarily offered to juniors at the district's comprehensive high schools as well as the Topeka Center for Advanced Learning and Careers (TCALC). This structured approach moves beyond anecdotal guidance, grounding post-secondary planning in data and enabling students to tailor their remaining high school coursework to align with their career goals, maximizing the return on their education investment.

This brings up our first and most significant qualification for support. While it appears that ACT WorkKeys will be an accepted means of assessment, we would want to make sure that our local Board has control over what acceptable assessment might be used in the future.

Despite our qualification of not directing, or adding to assessments, we maintain that this bill would help students greatly by building a structured, data-driven approach into a student's post-secondary planning process. We believe the systematic use of these assessments helps Kansas students make far more informed and intentional decisions about their post-secondary pathways, whether that involves directly entering the workforce, enrolling in technical training programs, or pursuing a four-year college degree. The use of these assessments to provide possible credits at postsecondary institutions is an additional positive step.

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However, the efficacy of an assessment that could guide students toward CTE is inextricably linked to the strength and availability of the CTE programs themselves. The future funding and long-term stability of CTE programs in Kansas have yet to be definitively decided by this Legislature.

This highlights our second essential qualification for support. The crucial provision for tax credits that assist in the financial support and expansion of CTE programs statewide—specifically the tax credit for equipment, materials, and program development—is scheduled to expire in 2026. Without the continuation and long term establishment of these tax credits, the operational and capital value of such assessments would significantly diminish. What good is assessing a student's aptitude for a technical field if there is a lack of funding to purchase the rapidly changing, industry-standard equipment or hire the necessary qualified instructors to teach the corresponding CTE program? The assessment identifies the need, but the CTE tax credits provide the crucial means to meet that need. We urge the Legislature to ensure the continuation of these vital CTE tax credits to ensure that HB2530 might reach its full potential.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We support the intent of HB2530 as an essential means of preparing Kansas students for the future, provided that the necessary funding mechanisms are clearly established and the complementary CTE support structures are secured.

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