



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

House Committee on Education

Proponent Testimony on HB 2487

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Good afternoon, Chair Estes, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2487. This legislation was introduced at our request.

The Kansas Education Opportunity Scholarship Program Act is a relatively new program, enacted in 2024, administered by our agency on behalf of the Legislature. According to the Act, eligibility is limited to Kansas resident students who have financial need, who are admitted to a public postsecondary institution or a private nonprofit institution, and who are either: (1) first generation students or (2) have **“...has a parent who is employed in Kansas as a teacher or paraprofessional for any of grades pre-K through 12.”**

For purposes of identifying qualified scholarship applicants who are first generation college students, Board staff rely upon the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) which has a question on the form for students to identify themselves as first generation, defined as neither parent having earned a bachelor’s degree or beyond.

There have been complications in identifying scholarship applicants who are eligible for the scholarship as dependents of teachers or paraprofessionals in grades pre-K through 12. The existing language could be sharpened to bring the divide between “teachers and paraprofessionals” and all other staff into clearer focus for scholarship applicants and for Board staff.

Particularly challenging applications of the Act’s language concerned non-classroom staff who hold teaching licenses, and non-instructional classroom staff. For example, counselors may be both licensed as teachers and referred to as teachers in their employment contracts, but do not provide classroom instruction to students. Alternatively, interventionists may be contracted by their districts as “professional employees” to work

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with students in the classroom, but not as instructors. Similar uncertainty surrounded applications submitted by students whose parents worked as virtual aides, students service coordinators, and speech pathologists.

As Board staff do not wish to substitute our judgement for that of the Legislature in setting the policy as to who is an eligible scholarship recipient, we request the amendments found on page two of the bill to clarify the student's parent should be teaching in the classroom or providing instructional support, as certified by the school administrator.

"Employed in Kansas as a teacher or paraprofessional" means an individual:

- (i) Who is an employee of a unified school district or the governing authority of any nonpublic school located in Kansas; and
- (ii) whose primary employment duties are providing classroom instruction to students in any of the grades pre-K through 12 or providing instructional support to students in any of the grades pre-K through 12.

(B) An individual shall not be considered "employed in Kansas as a teacher or paraprofessional" unless an administrator for the school at which such individual is employed certifies to the state board of regents, in such form and manner as prescribed by the state board, that such individual satisfies the provisions of subparagraph (A).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation. I would be happy to stand for questions.