



Virtual Opponent testimony to HB 2488

Presented to the House Education Committee

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Chair Estes and members of the committee,

I am Dr. Steven Stites, executive vice chancellor for the University of Kansas Medical Center and the chief health sciences officer for the University of Kansas. In addition to my university roles, I also serve as the executive vice president and chief medical officer of The University of Kansas Health System. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition of House Bill 2488. While well-intended, this bill would interfere with evidence-based medical education practices and undermine KU School of Medicine's long-standing mission to prepare physicians to serve Kansas communities.

Our institution has a rich history of serving Kansas. From our founding in 1905, our School of Medicine has emphasized educational innovation that is specifically tailored to meet the needs of Kansas. This includes developing programs in primary care, community health, rural medicine and establishing clinical partnerships across the state. These programs are delivered through three campuses in Kansas City, Wichita and Salina. By providing medical education in multiple areas across the state, the school has strengthened access to care in rural and medically underserved communities across Kansas. That work has earned us a reputation as a national leader in primary care, research and producing doctors that serve in rural areas.

Of course, this charge to serve our state means nothing unless we recruit the best and brightest Kansas students. For our most recent classes in the School of Medicine, more than 80% of matriculating students are Kansas residents. This percentage of in-state students is notably higher than most other medical schools across the country. Our efforts to prioritize residents is designed to help produce graduates who are more likely to remain in Kansas. These efforts have shown remarkable success, with over 50% of the physician workforce in the state graduating from KU School of Medicine. These students are admitted to our institution through a rigorous and increasingly competitive process, as our application numbers continue to grow year over year. Out of nearly 5,000 applicants annually, our class size is only 211 students. Over the last 10 years, MCAT scores for our classes have remained competitive, and the average GPA of incoming students has only increased. Our admissions process is state-focused, mission driven and strategically selective to help meet the needs of our communities.

Once admitted, our students are educated and assessed using a competency-based, holistic evaluation system that is based on national best practices. The goal is to measure whether students are developing the full set of skills required to become safe, effective physicians – not just how well they test. This approach aligns with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education’s (LCME) accreditation standards. The LCME is the nationally recognized accrediting body for MD programs in the United States. These standards emphasize institution specific assessment systems developed by our own faculty experts; experts who have the mission to serve Kansas as their main priority. Some of those experts have submitted testimony opposing this bill and will provide more information on why competency-based evaluation is the best method to produce Kansas doctors.

I am a proud Jayhawk who is honored to highlight the important work and high standards of the KU School of Medicine. We are a school made up of students who are Jayhawks, Wildcats, Gorillas, Tigers, Hornets, Ichabods and countless others from around the state. We come together for one mission. That mission is the directive we have received from the legislature for decades; to serve the people of Kansas. Simply put, we meet our mission daily, and we do it exceedingly well. Should that mission change to a focus on the best grades, the best GPAs and admitting more out of state students, it will have a dramatic impact on the state’s ability to retain students after graduation and will undoubtedly negatively impact our medical workforce. It is crucial to understand that high letter grades do not necessarily equate to high quality physicians. Students should be judged holistically by competencies with a focus on mastery, not test taking. Our process is rigorous, and our students must meet our competency standards to pass. Our bar will not be lowered. I ask you to trust us as Kansans to continue to fulfill the mission as it currently stands. The mission to serve Kansas.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,



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