



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Proponent Testimony on HB 2248 For the House Higher Education Budget Committee

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Kansas Board of Regents**

Good afternoon, Chair Howe, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss HB 2248.

Background

The Kansas Nursing Initiative was first established by the 2006 Legislature to address the growing nursing shortage by providing additional resources to nursing education programs. The state funds are granted to postsecondary institutions' nursing programs through a competitive grant process and required matching funds from the institution.

Subject to annual appropriation from the Legislature through the Nursing Faculty and Supplies Grant Program, \$3.8 million is available to public and private institutions with nursing programs, currently totaling 39 institutions. These grant funds support faculty and nursing lab supplies with the goal of improving program quality and student success.

The program's appropriation to the Board of Regents for Fiscal Year 2025 reads as follows (2024 Senate Bill 28, Section 116(a)):

Nursing faculty and supplies

grant program (561-00-1000-4130).....\$3,787,193

Provided, That any unencumbered balance in the nursing faculty and supplies grant program account in excess of \$100 as of June 30, 2024, is hereby reappropriated for fiscal year 2025: *Provided further*, That the state board of regents is hereby authorized to make grants to Kansas postsecondary educational institutions with accredited nursing programs from the nursing faculty and supplies grant program account for expansion of nursing faculty, laboratory supplies and tools for student success: *And provided further*, That such grants shall be either need-based or competitive and shall be matched on the basis of \$1 from the nursing faculty and supplies grant program account for \$1 from the postsecondary educational institution receiving the grant.

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Eligibility criteria for a grant include:

- State approval by the Kansas Board of Nursing and national program accreditation;
- Average three-year NCLEX test scores of program graduates at or above the three-year national average; and
- Documented articulation of one of the following degree transitions: Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Science in Nursing to Master of Science in Nursing, or Master of Science in Nursing to Doctor of Nursing Practice.

To assist those programs not meeting the above criteria, 10% of the money is set aside for alternative applications to obtain national accreditation or to improve NCLEX scores. Grants are awarded on a yearly basis, which allows institutions to address deficiencies and become eligible for funding in subsequent years.

House Bill 2248

As the agency that administers this grant program for the Legislature, we appreciate the interest in the program. Today's testimony is to highlight where this bill differs from the current program – either from the appropriation language or from how our agency has administered the program, from lessons learned over time. It is not clear if these differences were intentional, but felt it was important to highlight the distinctions.

Nonconsumable Supplies

HB 2248 would allow up to \$100,000 per institution in grant monies to be used for only non-consumable lab supplies and equipment. The current program allows grant monies to be used for nursing lab supplies, as they can be relatively expensive and are widely used in delivering a nursing program.

Also, the amount allowable in HB 2248 for supplies at \$100,000 would consume the \$3.7 million appropriation, unless the Board of Regents elected to award smaller amounts than the cap.

Adjunct Clinical Instructors

HB 2248 would allow grant monies to be used for only adjunct clinical faculty. The current program allows grant monies to be used more broadly for nursing program faculty, simulation faculty and other necessary instructors – not only adjunct clinical faculty. The current program also allows grant monies to be used for professional development, which is a key part of this grant. For smaller nursing programs, this grant is the only way for faculty to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

Tools for Student Success

HB 2248 would allow grant monies to be used “for student support that may impact a student’s ability to attend and complete the program, including, but not limited to, childcare services.” This would be a completely new direction for allowable uses and may benefit from some additional clarification as to what would be intended to be covered by the grant. The grant has traditionally targeted support for direct nursing program expenses and not students’ costs for the program.

Set Aside for Institutions

HB 2248 would not allow a set aside of grant monies to nursing programs that are not accredited. The current program has a set-aside of about 10% for programs seeking national accreditation after they are approved by the Kansas Board of Nursing or working on improvement of first-time NCLEX scores. The set-aside is strongly supported by the Kansas Board of Nursing, as they see in practice how state support helps programs to become fully eligible. The goal here is to welcome and support new programs and improve existing programs.

Institutional Match

HB 2248 would require no institutional match. The current program requires a match from the institution on a \$1:\$1 basis.

We would be happy to work with the Kansas Hospital Association if they have interest in addressing any of these differences with the current program, in advance of your Committee taking action on the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.