

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STEVEN K. HOWE
DISTRICT 71

February 9, 2026

Higher Education Budget Committee
Representative Adam Turk, Chairman
151-S, Kansas State Capitol Building

Dear Chairman Turk, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony in support of **HB 2523**. This legislation is designed to modernize and streamline the affiliation process for higher education institutions throughout Kansas.

The inspiration for this bill stems from my time serving on the Higher Education Committee. I witnessed the unnecessarily arduous and lengthy process required for Fort Hays State University, Northwest Technical College, and North-Central Technical College to reach a mutual affiliation. Under our current system, "legacy" policies—such as rigid service areas and mandatory legislative approval—act as hurdles rather than safeguards.

HB 2523 removes these barriers, sending a clear message to our institutions: the status quo is no longer an option. By eliminating service area restrictions, we encourage a healthy environment of competition and cooperation.

Frankly, our current landscape is not fiscally sustainable. Between our municipal university, six Regents universities, seven technical colleges, 19 community colleges, and 21 independent institutions, we are maintaining a capacity that far outpaces current demand. We must empower institutions to seek affiliations now, on their own terms, to ensure their long-term viability and protect the interests of Kansas taxpayers.

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While I recognize that no piece of legislation is perfect, I believe this bill serves as a vital starting point for a necessary conversation. It addresses the immediate need to remove the "red tape" hindering progress while providing a framework for the future of Kansas higher education.

Thank you, Chairman Turk, and members of the committee. I appreciate your consideration and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Steven K. Howe
State Representative, District 71
Salina and Saline County