



## KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

### House Committee on Higher Education Budget

### Proponent Testimony on HB 2523

February 9, 2026

**Blake Flanders**  
**President and CEO, Kansas Board of Regents**

Good afternoon, Chair Turk, and Members of the Committee. This testimony is submitted in support of House Bill 2523. Our System has experience with several successful affiliations – Washburn University and the Washburn Institute of Technology; Wichita State University and Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences; and most recently, Fort Hays State University and Fort Hays Tech North Central and Fort Hays Tech Northwest.

This legislation will authorize further affiliations to occur among Kansas universities and colleges on a voluntary basis, which will be an important tool available to institutions facing the challenges of a shrinking rural population and a looming decline in the number of potential college-bound students from diminishing population. The ability of institutions to affiliate will allow them to strategically utilize their respective resources in ways that can create access and opportunities for students, the communities the institutions serve, and the State of Kansas.

We have seen previous affiliations create stronger workforce pipelines by enabling joint program design, stackable credentials, and applied learning aligned with regional labor needs without eliminating local campuses or missions. This directly supports high-demand sectors such as healthcare, construction, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture.

With this legislation, no affiliation could occur without local consent, when the governing boards for both institutions are in agreement with the terms. Permissive affiliations create the opportunity for reform without disruption. Institutions would be positioned to share leadership and services, and to coordinate on course delivery while avoiding forced mergers or campus closures; thereby protecting access in rural and underserved areas while improving sustainability. Greater administrative efficiency will allow resources to be redirected towards instruction, workforce training, and student success.

★ LEADING HIGHER EDUCATION ★

House Bill 2523 gives Kansas the legal framework to strengthen workforce pipelines, expand access in rural communities, and improve stewardship of public resources—while preserving local control and institutional identity. It does not mandate mergers. It authorizes collaboration.

As introduced, House Bill 2523 includes language eliminating institutional service areas. If service areas are eliminated, we would recommend three additional statutes for modification.

- 1) In K.S.A. 74-32,271(b)(1)(A) [Promise Scholarship Act], strike the words “and with a recognized service area”:

“(b) As used in the Kansas promise scholarship act:

(1) “Eligible postsecondary educational institution” means:

(A) Any community college or technical college established under the laws of this state ~~and with a recognized service area~~;

(B) the Washburn institute of technology; or

(C) any not-for-profit institution of postsecondary education with its main campus or principal place of operation in Kansas that offers a promise eligible program, is operated independently and not controlled or administered by any state agency or subdivision of the state, maintains open enrollment and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency for higher education in the United States.”

- 2) In K.S.A. 74-32,430(b)(3) [Kansas Technology Innovation and Internship Program], replace the phrase “service area of” with the phrase “geographical area served by”:

“(b) Grants awarded under the provisions of this act shall be subject to the following conditions:

(1) Private business must provide financial or in-kind support, or any combination thereof, to the career technical educational institutions equaling 100% of the amount of the grant; and

(2) the technical course or program must be new to Kansas, or, if an equivalent course or program is already in existence in Kansas, the new course or program is not offered at a site within 100 miles of a site at which the existing, equivalent course or program is offered; and

(3) the technical course or program must relate to a business or industry located in the ~~service~~ geographical area ~~of~~ served by the career technical educational institution.”

3) In K.S.A. 71-222, delete subsection (f):

“The board of trustees of each community college shall annually publish the following information on such community college's website homepage with an easily identifiable link, which shall be titled, “Taxpayer and student transparency data”:

. . .

~~**(f) the enrollment percentage of students residing in the service area of the community college;**~~”

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