



**To: Senator Renee Erickson, Chair and Members, Senate Education Committee**

**From: Kylee Childs, Director of Government Affairs, LeadingAge Kansas**

**Date: 2/4/2025**

LeadingAge Kansas is the state association for not-for-profit and mission-focused aging services. We have 150 member organizations across Kansas, which include not-for-profit nursing homes, retirement communities, hospital long-term care units, assisted living, home plus, senior housing, low-income housing, home health agencies, home and community-based service programs, PACE and Meals on Wheels. Our members serve more than 25,000 older Kansans each day and employ more than 20,000 people across the state.

#### **Proponent Testimony for SB44**

When the Promise Scholarship Act was established, it aimed to provide financial support to students attempting to gain credentials or necessary degrees in high-demand fields such as mental and physical healthcare. As part of the healthcare sector that primarily employs individuals graduating from technical or community colleges, we are supportive of continuing to fund this scholarship as an opportunity to engage students to enter the healthcare field.

This bill represents a significant opportunity to address workforce challenges within Kansas adult care homes by improving access to education and training for current and future workers at a wider variety of colleges. Expanding the Kansas Promise Scholarship Program to include more not-for-profit and accredited educational institutions is a much-needed step to support the growth of a skilled workforce for adult care homes. Here's how this bill can be transformative:

#### **1. Increased Access to Training Programs**

By broadening the range of eligible educational institutions, more workers in adult care homes—especially those in rural and underserved areas—will be able to access affordable and high-quality training programs. This will help fill critical direct care roles in facilities across the state.

#### **2. Addressing Recruitment Shortages**

Expanding eligibility for scholarships means Kansas can recruit workers into caregiving professions by making training programs more accessible. With a growing demand for care services, this bill would help ensure a steady flow of skilled workers entering the long-term care sector.

#### **3. Supporting Employee Advancement**

Senate Bill 44 also opens pathways for current employees to advance in their careers. By reducing the financial burden of education, adult care home staff can more easily pursue higher-level certifications or nursing degrees, such as Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) or Registered

Nurses (RNs). Upskilling the existing workforce not only helps retain staff but also improves care quality and provides a better career trajectory for employees.

#### **4. Reducing Financial Barriers**

Many adult care home workers are low-wage earners who face financial barriers to advancing their education. By expanding the Kansas Promise Scholarship Program, this bill reduces those barriers and encourages a diverse workforce to consider caregiving as a sustainable and fulfilling career.

**Earlier in the fall of 2024, we were made aware that funding for the Kansas Promise Scholarship Program had either run out completely or would be exhausted soon, thereby limiting opportunities for students to continue their education and meet the demands of our workforce sector.** Legislative reports from the Kansas Board of Regents for 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 show an overall increase in higher education enrollment, indicating that the Promise Scholarship Act has successfully fulfilled its purpose.

**Given the high demands across the healthcare sector in Kansas and the increased participation each year, according to the Kansas Board of Regents reports, we respectfully request that funding for the Promise Scholarship Program be increased to \$12.0 million for FY26.** This will ensure that more students across various institutions can continue to access the vital training needed to meet workforce demands, particularly in the healthcare and caregiving sectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB44. Please contact us with any questions you may have.