



February 4, 2025

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. 44, AN ACT concerning education; relating to the Kansas promise scholarship program; expanding the postsecondary educational institutions eligible to participate in such program.

The Chamber stands in strong support of SB 44, which would expand the number of Kansas educational institutions eligible to participate in the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act. The Promise Act has proven to be a valuable tool in addressing workforce shortages in high-demand industries by providing critical financial assistance to students pursuing two-year degrees and technical certificates.

However, we urge the Legislature to not only expand institutional eligibility through SB 44 but also to increase funding for the program. The Kansas Promise Scholarship hit its \$10 million cap last year, demonstrating both the demand for this initiative and the need for greater investment to ensure continued access for students. Without additional funding, this program risks turning away qualified applicants who could fill crucial workforce gaps in our state.

Additionally, while the Promise Act currently applies only to Kansas residents, our state faces an ongoing labor shortage that requires attracting and retaining more workers. We encourage an amendment to SB 44 that would allow out-of-state students to qualify for the scholarship, provided they commit to living and working in Kansas for at least two years after earning their degree or certificate. Expanding eligibility in this way would not only help address our workforce needs but also strengthen Kansas' ability to compete with neighboring states for skilled talent.

The Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce strongly believes that SB 44, coupled with increased funding and expanded eligibility, will further enhance Kansas' ability to develop a strong, well-trained workforce. We appreciate your leadership in addressing this critical issue and urge you to support these necessary improvements to the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins  
Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce