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MEMORANDUM

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
From: Office of Revisor of Statutes
Date: February 12, 2025
Subject: SB 214 — Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Act

Senate Bill 214 would enact the attorney training program for rural Kansas act to provide financial assistance to lawyers and law students who practice law in rural areas. SB 214 would establish two programs as part of the attorney training program for rural Kansas act, the law student training and loan program for rural Kansas and the attorney training and loan repayment program for rural Kansas.

Definitions

Section 1 of the bill would provide definitions for relevant terms used in both programs, including "law student," "practice of law," "program agreement" and "rural" or "rural community." The term "rural" or "rural community" would mean, "any county of this state other than Douglas, Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte counties."

Advisory Committee

Section 2 would establish the attorney training program for rural Kansas advisory committee. The membership of the advisory committee would be:

- Three attorneys licensed in Kansas and who reside in a rural community;
- Two non-attorneys who reside in a rural community;
- One representative from the Washburn school of law; and
- One representative from the University of Kansas school of law.

The chief justice would appoint the chairperson of the advisory committee. The committee may meet at any time and any place on the call of the chairperson. Additionally, the bill authorizes the advisory committee to adopt rules and regulations to administer and implement both programs.

Law Student Training and Loan Program for Rural Kansas

Section 3 of SB 214 would establish the law student training and loan program for rural Kansas. This program would be administered by the advisory committee in coordination with Washburn university and the university of Kansas for each university's respective law students.

The program would authorize each law school to enter into program agreements with qualified law students. Preference would be given to Kansas residents. Subject to appropriations, each student that enters into such an agreement would receive a loan in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 per year for not more than three years. This loan would be for the cost of tuition, books, supplies and other school expenses associated with pursuing a law degree. If a student satisfies the obligations of the program, the loan provided to such student would be deemed satisfied and forgiven.

To qualify for the program, a student would be required to:

- Complete a law degree at the law school;
- Complete all required training and classes determined by the law school and advisory committee;
- Complete an externship and mentoring requirement with an approved licensed attorney in a rural community;
- Engage in the full-time practice of law in a rural committee after admittance to the bar. This commitment would be for one year for every year the student received the loan; and
- Repay the loan amount for failure to engage in the full-time practice of law as required.

The service obligation required by the program would be satisfied if the obligation to practice law is completed, the individual is unable to practice law due to permanent disability or the individual dies. The service obligation may be postponed during any period of temporary disability, the reason for postponement is covered by the family and medical leave act or for a reason agreed to in the program agreement.

The dean of the Washburn school of law and the university of Kansas school of law would annually submit a report to the legislative committees on judiciary on the program.

Attorney Training and Loan Repayment Program for Rural Kansas

Section 4 of SB 214 would establish the attorney training and loan repayment program for rural Kansas. This program would be administered by the office of judicial administration in coordination with the advisory committee.

The program would authorize the office of judicial administration, in coordination with the advisory committee to develop and maintain the program to provide that the state agrees to pay all or part of the principal, interest and related expenses of the educational loans of eligible rural attorneys who participate in the program. The advisory committee would establish the total amount of annual financial assistance available under the program, but the amount of loan repayment provided to each eligible attorney could not exceed \$20,000 for each year the attorney establishes eligibility for assistance. The total repayment assistance for each attorney could not exceed \$100,000 or five years.

To qualify for the program, an attorney would be required to:

- Apply to the advisory committee;
- Hold a law degree from an accredited institution;
- Be licensed to practice law in Kansas and be in good standing;
- Have outstanding student loan debt;
- Reside in a rural community; and
- Be engaged in the practice of law in a rural community.

The program would require eligible rural attorneys to enter into an agreement to practice law in a rural community for one year for every year the attorney received the loan. Each agreement entered into would include penalties for breach of contract.

The service obligation required by the program would be satisfied if the obligation to practice law is completed, the individual is unable to practice law due to permanent disability or the individual dies. The service obligation may be postponed during any period of temporary disability, the reason for postponement is covered by the family and medical leave act or for a reason agreed to in the program agreement.

The office of judicial administration would be required to report to the legislative budget committee, and the legislative committees on judiciary on the program. The report would include the amount of moneys allocated, the number of attorneys who applied, the number of attorneys who received a loan, how the moneys were used and the process for the allocation of moneys.

Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Fund

Section 5 would establish the attorney training program for rural Kansas fund administered by the judicial administrator for both programs. Moneys in the fund would be expended only for student loans for law students who enter into an agreement or student loan repayment for licensed attorneys who enter into an agreement under the act.

Effective Date

The bill would take effect on July 1, 2025, upon publication in the statute book.