



**PROPONENT Testimony on SB 336
For the Senate Education Committee
February 13, 2020**

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Chair Baumgardner and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you to provide proponent testimony related to Senate Bill 336.

Kansas' Independent Colleges:

KICA represents the twenty independent colleges of Kansas, all of which are not-for-profit institutions of higher education, all of which offer undergraduate degrees, all of which have their principal campus in Kansas, all of whom are regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and all of whom maintain an open enrollment policy consistent with Kansas statutes.

The state of Kansas, via the Kansas Board of Regents, has specific obligations governing “private and out-of-state” educational institutions, per the Private and Out-of-State Post-Secondary Educational Institutions Act. All twenty KICA institutions are exempt from that statute. Thus, for the independent members of KICA, KBOR has no governing role (as it does for the six 4-year Regents universities), coordinating role (as it does for the community colleges, technical colleges, and Washburn University) nor regulatory role (as it does for any for-profit college or college based outside of Kansas that wishes to operate here). Furthermore, KICA institutions do not receive any direct institution funding from the state of Kansas, as befits our independent status.

General Support for SB 336:

Our institutions are appreciative that the authors of SB 336 include accredited independent institutions within the definition of eligible postsecondary institutions, both in the context of eligible 2-year institutions and eligible 4-year institutions. We acknowledge that the evidence from other states that have experimented with variations of last-dollar scholarships for community colleges (similar to what is proposed in SB 336) is mixed. It may be too early to fully evaluate the efficacy of such programs. However early evidence does indicate that including both public and non-profit colleges has greater potential. Those states that neglected to include private non-profit colleges saw a shift in educational attainment rather than an increase in attainment. Thus, we believe that if Kansas is going to offer a variation on what amounts to “free” community college, private non-profit colleges must be included in the approach.

Comments on SB 354:

While our support is not contingent on these changes being made, we do offer several recommendations for improvement to the bill:

Accreditor Naming

Section 2(e)(1) has an incorrect reference to the regional accrediting body for higher education in Kansas. The correct name is now just the “Higher Learning Commission” or “HLC”. In 2014, the HLC officially separated from the North Central Association. The latter now handles only K-12 issues while the HLC is focused on higher education.

Program Articulation

Section 2(g) notes that eligible four-year postsecondary educational institutions have to offer baccalaureate and associate degrees. KICA recommends this be broadened slightly to include those four-year postsecondary educational institutions which have a program-level articulation agreement with a Kansas community or technical

college. This would ensure that there is a clearly defined and aligned pathway for students pursuing an associate's degree or technical credential to pursue further baccalaureate study but do so at a separate institution within Kansas that has committed to a specific program to serve those students. Thus, for instance, an institution such as Southwestern College – which does not offer associates degrees – could still develop specific partnerships with Cowley Community College or Butler County Community College to design specific 4-year pathways for students receiving support from the proposed scholarship.

Physical Presence

Section 2(j)(2) deals with ensuring eligible institutions have a “physical presence” in Kansas. KICA suggests a stricter definition here to require eligible institutions have their “principal” physical presence in Kansas. Thus, it ensures that the scholarship funds flow solely to those institutions who are Kansas institutions – with their main campus here, committed to serving Kansans. This would keep the scholarship funds in Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to request these improvements to a bill we otherwise support. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional data as you request.