



PROPONENT Testimony on HB 2328
For the House Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Committee
March 22, 2021
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Chair Tarwater and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony related to House Bill 2328. Several of Kansas' independent colleges and universities offer many academic programs directly related to the aviation and aeronautics industry. Thus, our students and industry partners would benefit substantially from the programs conceived in the bill.

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 (K.S.A. 74-32,162 and subseq). 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.

KICA and Aviation:

Among the twenty non-profit, independent colleges and universities in Kansas, several have aviation-related degree programs. Two of our members are particularly engaged in this field. Hesston College, in Hesston, KS, has a long-standing three-year degree program for professional pilots and a two-year degree program for air traffic control professionals. Central Christian College of Kansas, in McPherson, KS, has a three-year degree program for pilots and a growing certificate program in UAV operation. In both cases, these programs are seeing increased interest from student and corporate partners. Moreover, several other KICA institutions have academic programs with pipelines into Kansas' vibrant aviation industry firms supporting their important role in Kansas' economy. For instance, Benedictine College, in Atchison, KS, has several ABET-accredited engineering programs and is adding more, and Friends University, in Wichita, KS, is in the preliminary approval process for similar programs to serve the Wichita area.

We have long supported the use of any tools at our disposal to encourage post-secondary attainment that fits the needs of Kansas employers, especially those that ensure a timely partnership between our colleges and employers and that requires both of us to have "skin in the game." HB 2328 appears to provide another such tool, and as such, we support its passage.

Of note, we are grateful that the bill includes explicit acknowledgement of the role of the Federal Aviation Administration as a recognized approval body for the degree programs. This helps ensure that bachelor's programs in aviation – such as at Hesston College – are adequately included as eligible programs per the apparent intent of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you on this issue. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional data as you request.