

UNITED WE .

February 22, 2021

Testimony re: Kansas Senate Bill 137
Senate Commerce Committee

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

It's been my honor to work with many of you in previous legislative sessions on issues impacting women's economic and civic leadership as the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation. Our organization recently sharpened its focus and changed our name to United Women's Empowerment (United WE) to better reflect our collaborative approach.

Our work to unlock the economic and civic leadership potential of women has never been more important as communities recover from the Coronavirus pandemic. That's why we're supporting Senate Bill 137, and it's House companion (House Bill 2066), which we believe will reduce barriers so more women and their families can live and work in Kansas.

Our position is based on our three research studies: 1) The Coronavirus Pandemic's Impact on Women in Missouri and Kansas released in 2020; 2) a research brief on Occupational Licensing and Reciprocity released in 2017; and 3) the Status of Women in Kansas, focused on economic development indicators and developing a baseline to monitor Kansas' progress released in 2015.

Key findings we believe should guide policy change include:

- Research on occupational licensing indicates that barriers to easily transferring licenses to other states limits mobility of the licensed workforce.

- Employed women are more likely to hold a certification or license than employed men (28.1 percent and 23.2 percent, respectively). For example, teaching and nursing may have more geographic flexibility; however, those with licenses are less likely to move across state lines. When they do, they can be met with new requirements to enter a field they are already licensed in, creating a barrier that impacts their personal income and the economy.
- Working women face a disproportionate economic impact from the Coronavirus pandemic when compared with their male counterparts.

We support efforts to improve reciprocity of occupational licenses and suggest three best practices to coincide with such a policy change: (1) a robust background screening system is in place, (2) a legitimate accreditation or certification standard that ensures qualifications are truly achieved, and (3) an ongoing investment in the department's infrastructure to ensure the public is provided excellent customer service.

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to the Kansas economy. We know that supporting the state's economic recovery is a top priority for you. To that end, United WE urges you to consider Senate Bill 137 to further economic growth by allowing licensed professionals to move across state lines and participate fully in the workforce.

United WE has commissioned an update to the Status of Women in Kansas and we look forward to sharing those findings with you this summer. Until then, please don't hesitate to contact me if United WE can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy D. Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy D. Doyle
President and CEO
United WE