



PROPONENT Testimony on HB 2118
For the House Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Committee
February 5, 2019
Matt Lindsey
President, Kansas Independent College Association

Chairman Tarwater and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony related to House Bill 2118. Several of Kansas' independent colleges and universities offer academic programs directly related to the aviation industry. Thus they, and their students and industry partners, would benefit substantially from the programs conceived in the bill.

Kansas' Independent Colleges:

KICA represents the nineteen 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 nineteen 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.

KICA and Aviation:

Among the nineteen 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, a number of other KICA institutions have academic programs with pipelines into Kansas' vibrant aviation industry firms supporting their important role in Kansas' economy.

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 that requires both of us to have "skin in the game." HB 2118 appears to provide another such tool, and as such, we support its passage.

Requests regarding HB 2118:

While we offer our support without reservation, we do recommend a few modifications to the bill be made to ensure clarity and efficacy.

- Section 1(e) refers to accreditation by a national or regional accrediting body. In Kansas, all public and non-profit institutions are accredited by a regional accreditor (the Higher Learning Commission, or "HLC"). While not universally true across the nation, in Kansas, the only institutions accredited by a national accreditor are for-profit institutions. We recommend removing the reference to "national" and limit the eligible institutions to only those accredited by "a regional accrediting body." Relatedly, Section 1(h) refers to only institutions with relevant programs accredited by HLC or ABET. Thus, consistency with 1(e) would be appropriate.

- Section 1(f) focuses primarily on aerospace engineering and manufacturing/technology, which is not consistent with the language inclusive of the aviation sector defined in Section 1(b). One approach to address this would be to add the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a recognized body for program approval (similar to ABET). This likely would assist in ensuring bachelor's programs in aviation – such as at Hesston College and Kansas State Polytechnic – are adequately included as eligible programs per the apparent intent of the bill.
- Section 1(i) would be more robust if it includes program-specific fees in addition to tuition. Aviation course fees can be sizeable due to flight time costs, for instance. Aerospace education likewise probably includes significant fees. And manufacturing technical programs often have significant fees related to tools and protective gear for students. These are often all lumped into “course fees.” Thus, we recommend inclusion of language that adds “program-specific course fees” as being covered.

These comments are offered as friendly improvements that we hope are considered.

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.