



**Testimony to Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Supporting Extension of the University Engineering Initiative
March 23, 2021
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) urges the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to favorably pass legislation extending transfers from the expanded lottery act revenues fund to the university engineering initiative. The KC Chamber's approximately 2,000 members (40% on the Kansas side) recognizes the vital importance STEM education plays for talent attraction/retention and economic development. Quality workforce development programs are a significant driver in economic development and by extending the University Engineering Initiative, the Legislature can signal to the business community not only in Kansas, but across the country, that Kansas is open for business.

Since the Kansas Legislature enacted this program in 2012, the University of Kansas, Kansas State University and Wichita State University have matched, dollar for dollar, the investment from the state resulting in over \$200 million in directed towards the education of engineers in Kansas. The program has been very successful for the State of Kansas in that it has met and exceeded its graduation targets at all three universities. In fact, it has met these targets three years ahead of schedule.

Through increasing enrollment, increasing scholarship and internship opportunities, and developing more robust relationships with STEM businesses in Kansas, the University Engineering Initiative Act will not only increase the number of engineering degrees awarded at Kansas universities, but also increase the pipeline of engineers in the workforce for Kansas companies to tap. Additionally, despite the economic downturn in 2020 from the coronavirus, qualified workers are going to be vital in the coming years. As Kansas looks to rebound and replace the jobs being vacated by retirements from baby boomers, a pipeline of qualified workers, especially in fields such as engineering, critical programs such as this will be even more important. The KC Chamber consistently hears from our engineering firms that they need more engineers. This is just one remedy to this workforce issue.

The KC Chamber supports HB2101 and urges this committee to favorably pass this legislation to ensure Kansas remains economically competitive.

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