



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Senate Committee on Ways and Means Testimony in Support of HB 2101

March 23, 2021

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President & CEO, Kansas Board of Regents**

Good morning Chairman Billinger and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2101, a bill that would reauthorize our successful University Engineering Initiative Act for another ten years.

The University Engineering Initiative Act was established by the 2011 Legislature after hearing from the engineering industry about the need for more graduates in the state. Our three public universities that offer baccalaureate engineering programs, Kansas State University, University of Kansas, and Wichita State University were eager to produce more graduates in this field to keep up with the workforce needs of this important segment of the Kansas economy.

The original legislation set forth a goal to achieve 1,365 graduates by 2021 from a baseline of 875 graduates. We surpassed that goal by 2018 and our most recent graduate number for 2020 is nearly 1,700. With a yearly investment of \$10.5 million from the Expanded Lottery Act Revenues Fund split equally between each of the three universities with at least a 1:1 match from those institutions with non-SGF dollars, this program has proved to be both successful and instrumental in meeting the needs of the engineering industry.

As this program reaches the ten-year mark, we consulted with the engineering industry about the need to continue this program into the future. As they have testified this morning, there is still a strong workforce demand for engineers in our state and the continuation of the program is a high priority of the engineering industry. Building on the infrastructure we now have in place with our faculty and facilities, we will deploy new strategies to retain more of the graduates within Kansas. We will collaborate with the Department of Commerce in their business recruitment efforts, expand internships to connect students to businesses before they graduate to fortify their connections to Kansas employers, as well as provide learning beyond the classroom, including extended employment opportunities which are longer than a typical three-month internship.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue. We urge your support on this critical issue.

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