

Kansas K-12 Budget Committee Testimony

Madam Chair and members of the K-12 Budget Committee-

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of HB2512.

My name is Kristian Starner and I am here today on behalf of Graduation Alliance, an organization that has over a decade and a half experience reengaging and reconnecting students and adults that have either dropped out or are on the brink of dropping out of high school. Our organization has extensive experience re-engaging former students, working directly with over 30,000 students in school districts across the country in states such as Florida, Indiana, Arkansas, Washington, Michigan and South Carolina.

There are likely around 24,000 Kansans between the ages of 16-19 that have dropped out of high school. HB2512 would expand the current diploma completion program framework to simply allow districts to address students 19 years of age and under who have dropped out of high school. This legislation would also incentivize and encourage school districts to re-engage these students throughout the year.

Currently, Kansas has a robust Adult Workforce Diploma Program in place for Kansans over 19 years of age that lack a high school diploma. Kansas is one of the fastest growing adult high school diploma programs that Graduation Alliance has the honor of working with and we are proud to tout the success and innovation that Kansas is providing as a model for other states.

The program has had tremendous success since its inception in June 2020, with 345 adults attaining a high school diploma. HB2512 would simply expand the current statutory framework to Kansans 19 years of age and under that have dropped out of high school. In our experience working with this population, over 80% of students dropout of high school for non-academic reasons. They leave school for extenuating life circumstances that oftentimes hinder their ability to keep pace with that of their peers.

HB2512 will provide school districts with an additional resource to locate, enroll and support students that have dropped out anytime throughout the year. The statute also provides a pay-for-credit earned structure where districts can receive funding when credits are earned by these students.

By passing HB2512, Kansas school districts will be able to re-engage students 19 years of age and under throughout the year while increasing graduation rates and academic achievement.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you today in support of HB2512.