

To: Senate Ways & Means Committee
From: Tom Roberts, P.E., F.NSPE, F.ASEE
Kansas Society of Professional Engineers
Date: March 23, 2021
Re: Support of HB 2101

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for HB 2101.

I am Tom Roberts, P.E, F.NSPE, a past president of both the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers and the National Society of Professional Engineers. Today, I am honored to represent the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers (KSPE).

KSPE represents individual licensed engineers across the State of Kansas. For over 110 years, KSPE has worked to promote engineering by delivering professional development services, encouraging licensure, and advocating legislation and public policy for the betterment of human welfare and the industry.

KSPE is proud to support HB 2101 as it extends the University Engineering Initiative Act for another ten years. Created in 2011, the University Engineering Initiative Act, also known as the UEIA, is a ten-year program put in place to address the shortage of engineers in the Kansas workforce.

Administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce and Board of the Regents, the program provides \$10.5M each year from ELARF (Extended Lottery Act Revenue Fund). The funds are evenly split by Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, and Wichita State University to invest in their engineering programs. In turn, the three universities were tasked to increase the number of engineering graduates each year to a specific target by the tenth year.

We are pleased to say all three engineering programs surpassed their targets to increase the number of graduates. However, my colleagues in industry tell me there are still not enough engineers to meet employer demands in the state. I am sure we all want Kansas to be a place for our local firms to grow and where new companies can expand. However, we need to have enough engineers to satisfy private sector needs, in addition to filling instrumental roles within state and local government.

To this end, KSPE is joined by many stakeholders that request the extension of the UEIA through 2032 with the charge for Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, and Wichita State University engineering colleges and schools to maintain the program's targeted graduate goals for each of the next ten years.

There is a high degree of accountability and transparency in the UEIA program. The Board of Regents has a page on their website that tracks program data year by year. Moreover, assurances exist to show that dollars spent for the engineering programs are approved in concert by the Board of Regents and Department of Commerce.

We thank the Legislature for the creation and continued support of the UEIA. We also thank the Board of Regents and the Department of Commerce for their oversight. We commend the engineering programs at Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, and Wichita State University for their effectiveness in Kansas workforce development. This is a combined effort that has displayed notable progress since 2011 and we are excited to see continued improvement over the next decade.

HB 2101 passed the House last month 112-12 and received no opposition in the hearing. We urge your support of HB 2101.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Tom C. Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Tom Roberts, P.E., F.NSPE, F.ASEE