



**PROPONENT Testimony on SB 32
For the House Education Committee
March 17, 2021
Matt Lindsey**

President, Kansas Independent College Association

Chair Huebert and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 32.

Kansas' Independent Colleges:

KICA represents the twenty 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 twenty 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.

Support for SB 32:

Kansas' independent colleges and universities enroll many of “early” high school completers from Kansas high schools. Thus, we are grateful that the Legislature is considering policies that reflect our important role in Kansas' educational ecosystem.

In Fall 2020, 1,070 of our students enrolled on our main campuses were concurrent/dual credit students. That reflects approximately 7% of our main campus student body – a sizeable population. Many of our campuses have invested in innovative strategies and partnerships with USDs in the institution's geographic area. However, our concurrent enrollment is down 60% compared to Fall 2019. We suspect that that is entirely due to challenges and uncertainty at the high school level with online/hybrid/in-person changes going on throughout the system at the start of the academic year and enormous new pressures on teachers, including those star performers who would normally be helping to deliver concurrent education courses. In a “normal,” non-COVID-19, year, we typically have more than 2,500 high school students enrolled in early college courses at our institutions. Thus, once the COVID-19 pandemic has receded, we expect our numbers to rebound.

Our institutions are appreciative of the language in Section 4(f) of the bill which includes “accredited independent institutions” within the definition of eligible postsecondary institutions, and further specifies clearly in Section 3(f) that this includes only those independent institutions accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and having a main campus in Kansas. Thus, we think it right that the bill ensures that the usage of funds envisioned by this bill only flow to accredited institutions in Kansas and that the institutions meet the highest accreditation (i.e. quality) standard available.



Important Note on Concurrent Program Faculty:

We continue to have concerns about constraints on faculty qualifications imposed by our accrediting body. These constraints severely limit the capacity to deliver early college credit to high school students. The Higher Learning Commission requires any course that earns undergraduate college credit be taught by an instructor with at least 18 hours of masters-level credit or a master's degree in the specific discipline of the course. Sadly, a graduate degree in education/teaching is not sufficient. Thus, to teach Composition 101 requires the instructor have a master's in English, to teach American History I requires a master's degree in American History, etc.

While KICA institutions and our peers among the public universities are committed to early college programs, achieving transformative change on early college access across the state requires either additional supports for high school teachers to obtain these advanced credentials, change to the Higher Learning Commission's requirements, or radical improvements to synchronous online delivery mechanisms and the ability of students to access online education in all parts of the state. We encourage the committee to look additionally at policy tools to address this constraint through, among other concepts, supporting graduate education by high-achieving teachers

We appreciate the inclusion in this conversation and encourage the committee to recommend SB 32 favorably for passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you on this issue. I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional data as you request.