



Senate Education Committee
Regarding SB 22 - Extension of the postsecondary technical education authority
February 6, 2013

Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Sarah Whitman and I am the Technical Training Manager for KCP&L. Additionally, I Co-Chair the Kansas Energy Workforce Consortium (KEWC) and also serve on the KansasEnergyWorks Industry advisory board. Both groups exemplify key strategic partnerships that have developed between industry, education and government over the last few years in the great state of Kansas. The energy industry's urgent need for qualified skilled candidates to replace our aging technical workforce is well known and documented. My industry colleagues and I have worked diligently through KEWC to identify and mitigate specific threats to energy workforce sustainability. Thus far, our partners in Education and Government have shown great willingness to re-align the necessary education/training resources that technical education can provide. Although recent progress is extremely encouraging, this is a work in progress; therefore, I respectfully submit my ardent support of SB 22, which will extend the postsecondary technical education authority until June 30, 2017.

As you know, the TEA is made up of business leaders from diverse industry sectors who believe, as we do, that Kansas must have a technical education system that listens to business, responds with training programs that tie to industry needs and helps successful students become our future workforce. Similar to leadership and accountability demonstrated by the TEA, KEWC represents the majority of Kansas electric energy providers – Investor Owned Utilities, the Municipal Utilities Association and several large Electric Cooperatives who are actively engaged and strive to find one voice that influences our future energy workforce outcomes. This consortium is linked to the National Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), has forecasted state-wide energy workforce demand and is in the process of determining state-wide, industry-focused consensus on technical competencies, credentialing and strategy development to sustain key “at-risk” technical positions.

We are encouraged by recent TEA progress and truly believe that postsecondary education providers and their leadership are actually listening and more responsive to our needs. One example of this change is Program Alignment, whereby technical colleges have updated curriculum and refreshed their ties to jointly determined industry competencies, which will provide better guidance to students and render improved, qualified skilled candidate pools. Thanks to TEA structure and support, we are moving closer to standardized competencies, which assure industry that technical education (state-wide) understands energy industry requirements.

We are further encouraged by measures of success that TEA is putting into place. Outcome Metrics were chosen by business leaders and identified as most important to industry. Specifically, these accountability metrics include the number of industry credentials earned in technical programs, the number of students/graduates who get jobs and the average wage of those jobs. Therefore, future Kansas graduates will not only have the right skills and credentials but, with placement and other success-tracking metrics in place, they will more readily transition into high wage careers and become the energy workforce of the future.

These and other key TEA initiatives will make tangible differences to students, the energy industry and, in turn, the economic strength of the state. Again, I respectfully ask that you pass SB 22 so that TEA can continue to help link postsecondary education and industry success.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sarah Whitman
Kansas Energy Workforce Development Consortium, Co-Chair