



TO: Senate Commerce Committee

FROM: Lana Gordon, Kansas Grant Manager, Hamilton Ryker TalentGro

DATE: March 9, 2023

RE: House Bill 2292

Chairman Erickson and Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments regarding HB 2292.

I am Lana Gordon; I am a former teacher and owned several small businesses. I also served in the Kansas House of Representatives for 12 years and as Kansas Secretary of Labor for almost 7 years. In 2019 I was asked to serve the Commonwealth of Kentucky as Commissioner of Workforce Investment. In that role, I was responsible for most of the workforce programs for Kentucky, including the Workforce Centers (called Career Centers there), Unemployment Insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation as well as the Division of Apprenticeship.

Through my experiences of owning small businesses, involvement in state governments, particularly working closely with the economic development of those states, I know how important it is and will continue to be, to have a workforce prepared with the specific skills needed by individual businesses. The labor market has been challenging for a long time and continues to be so in tight labor supply and continual demand. Business growth is stunted when they are unable to find enough adequately trained staff members. Apprenticeship provides one of the tools for developing talent needed with a paid, on the job learning experience combined with what we call RTI, Related Technical Instruction. We know that Apprenticeship is one among many tools for workforce development solutions that has been used to upskill current employees, recruit new talent and has been proven to promote higher retention rates. I believe we need to look at apprenticeship as an investment to build our state's economy and help keep our young people in Kansas with jobs that allow for them to make a living wage. Recently, since the Pandemic, we have witnessed supply and demand issues that can be attributed, to some degree, to a worker shortage, which, in turn can stunt economic growth.

Most of the financial assistance provided for apprenticeship has been limited to paying only for costs incurred for training. HB 2292 would benefit businesses more because it would allow more flexibility in how the funds could be used such as towards some of the administrative costs of the program.

During my time in State Government in both Kansas and Kentucky, I was involved in learning about and working with programs supported largely by Federal dollars. In Kentucky, I became familiar with the Apprenticeship Division and could see their effectiveness, especially in comparison to programs I had seen in the past., I could see how the investment was being made into preparing workers by placing them into programs designed to fit with the skills businesses needed. There was a healthcare business in the Eastern part of Kentucky that was challenged by a workforce shortage. They decided the best way for them to attract and retain talent was to develop a robust apprenticeship program to train their own. They were able to upskill current employees and attract and develop others to work in the Appalachian Region, one

of the most impoverished areas in the nation, and help address their healthcare skills needs. They set up their own RTI and worked with young people in the area as well as recruiting new employees. I believe that the dollars spent on apprenticeship are an investment well made into the future of our economy.

After working in Kentucky, I returned to Kansas and worked as a consultant for a youth apprenticeship initiative. My work was focused on expanding Youth Apprenticeship opportunities in Kansas. A couple of highlights – The Jobs for America’s Graduates Program (JAG) was supportive of the program and became an Intermediary. The Kansas Department of Education hired a young person to be an IT apprentice working part time during the school year for them, learning a much-needed skill. A lot of groundwork about apprenticeship was established with the idea of Apprenticeship being well received by businesses. However, funding for this program was limited and covered only a small part of the costs for training. Many businesses were discouraged from participating because they were finding the administrative burden was cumbersome and prevented them from successful implementation. This is one of the reasons that I am supporting HB 2292. The incentives, as proposed in this bill, will allow for more flexibility to cover other costs incurred for apprenticeship programs which will encourage a broader participation rate.

I am currently working for Hamilton Ryker’s Workforce Development Division, TalentGro, which largely focuses its work within the area of Apprenticeship. Hamilton Ryker is a 52 year old national workforce solutions company.

We currently are authorized to run apprenticeship programs in 26 states. TalentGro was awarded one of the contracts to serve as an Intermediary for the Kansas SAEI grant in which our efforts are focused on expanding opportunities for apprenticeship throughout Kansas in high demand fields of Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, and IT. In this role, we help employers design apprenticeship programs that will fit their individual business needs, provide guidance, and keep track of grant information for the Kansas Department of Commerce as well as the USDOL.

With the team at Hamilton Ryker TalentGro, I have been working with the Kansas Hospital Association and some of their members to develop apprenticeship programs to address some of their workforce needs within the healthcare sector. The current version of HB 2292 could be of benefit, to not only, for profit, but also non-profit organizations. The healthcare sector has been amongst the highest demand jobs, not only in Kansas, but also nationwide, for many years. With a shortage of healthcare personnel, everyone suffers, with an even bigger struggle for rural areas. I believe that an investment in the healthcare industry can pay big dividends in having a more highly trained workforce who are able to provide quality patient care, make less errors, earn higher wages and as a result enjoy their jobs more, stay longer. . I stand in support of HB2292 which provides the opportunity to not only help our healthcare businesses, but also other Kansas businesses grow their own workforce with a special interest of keeping employees in Kansas. Please consider this policy a wise investment in talent contributing to our state’s economic development success.

I appreciate your utmost consideration in passing this legislation.