



**PROPONENT Oral Testimony on HB 2036
To the Senate Assessment & Taxation Committee
March 21, 2017
Matt Lindsey, President
Kansas Independent College Association**

Testimony:

Chair Tyson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony related to House Bill 2036. Several of Kansas' independent colleges and universities offer academic programs directly related to the aviation industry. Thus they, and their students and industry partners, would benefit substantially from the programs conceived in the bill.

Kansas' Independent Colleges:

KICA represents the nineteen independent colleges of Kansas, all of whom are not-for-profit institutions of higher education, all of whom offer undergraduate degrees, and all of whom are regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Among those are the state's oldest institution – Baker University in Baldwin City, founded in 1858 – and the state's youngest non-proprietary institution – MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, founded in 1966. Despite deep faith-based roots, all our institutions maintain an open enrollment policy. We each accept any academically eligible and qualified student regardless of religion, gender, race, or national origin.

While we use the word “independent” to describe our colleges and universities, in casual language, one can substitute “private” or “nonprofit.” Each of our institutions are separately governed by their own board of trustees and we are not governed by, coordinated by, or required to obtain further authorization from the Kansas Board of Regents. “Independent” also reflects the fact that our colleges receive no direct institutional funds from the state of Kansas, or from county or local property taxes. The only public funding that typically flows to our colleges comes to us from our students themselves, via student grants and scholarships and federal student aid programs.

KICA and Aviation:

Among the nineteen non-profit, independent colleges and universities in Kansas, several have aviation-related degree programs. Two of our members are particularly engaged in this field. Hesston College, in Hesston, KS, has a long-standing three-year degree program for professional pilots and a two-year degree program for air traffic control professionals. Central Christian College of Kansas, in McPherson, KS, has a three-year degree program for pilots and a growing certificate program in UAV (“drone”) operation. In both cases, these programs are seeing increased interest from student and corporate partners.

House Amendments:

When this bill was heard in the House Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Committee, KICA submitted neutral testimony. In its original form, Section 1(e) of the bill limited eligible institutions to those with *national* accreditation. However, for institutional-level accreditation, regional accreditation is the “gold-standard” for quality. In Kansas, regional accreditation is offered by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). HLC's regional accreditation provides peer-reviewed quality assurance for all types of higher education institutions – public, non-profit, and for-profit. “National” accreditors, as originally listed in the bill, tend to be more niche focused on certain specific types of degree programs (nursing or engineering) for

instance) and for some institutions in the for-profit higher education community. Thus, adding the references in Line 31 on page 1 and lines 8 and 9 on page 2 corrected an inadvertent oversight that would have made Hesston, Central Christian, and other KICA members ineligible to participate in the program, while at the same time improved the program's linkage to only those institutions that met sufficient quality standards.

After the changes made by the several committees in the House as the bill worked through the process there, KICA supports HB 2036 as it now stands. The bill would provide a useful tool to colleges and employers, particularly along the I-135 corridor, to invest in enhanced training and college educations for employees in the aviation industry. Doing so would be a net gain for all of these communities, and thus Kansas as a whole.

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