



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Chairman Tarwater and Members of the House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee:

In 2015, Wichita State University collaborated with the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Wichita Chamber and Sedgwick County Medical Society to establish a plan to grow the economy of Kansas by focusing on vital needs of industry and leveraging our strengths as a ten county region while acknowledging that strategic investments that reach across industry need to be made. This plan was called the Blueprint for Regional Economy Growth (BREG).

As the manufacturing hub for the state of Kansas, Wichita is able to claim that we are number one in STEM jobs and third per capita in engineers and number one in aerospace employment. Kansas itself ranks in the top ten of aviation industry as a percentage of a state's GDP. Given our history with aviation manufacturing, this isn't surprising; however, it shouldn't be taken for granted.

The economy of Kansas continues to struggle to rebound from the Great Recession and Wichita is 98 out of 100 metro areas for economic growth. As a state, Kansas is losing high paying jobs and replacing them with lower paying jobs, and we are number five in states with the highest amount of people leaving. Simultaneously, employers are facing increasing strains on workforce demands.

In 2017, Spirit AeroSystems announced production increases leading to the need for 1,000 new employees. In 2018, it announced the need for an additional 1,400 new employees. Wichita State University and WSU Tech are excited for this growth in workforce demands and have developed new programs to keep pace. WSU Tech was recently noted as the second fastest growing technical college in the nation. This is thanks in large part to employers needing individuals trained in specific skills. The issue before us as a state continues to be attracting the population and training them to meet the needs of industry.

Sincerely,

Andy Schlapp

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