

**Kansas Department of Commerce
Neutral Testimony on SB 336
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Prepared for Senate Education
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The Kansas Department of Commerce would like to testify as neutral on SB 336. This bill would provide a scholarship program that allows high school graduates and adults returning to college who meet certain requirements, the opportunity to complete their education.

A significant finding in the Framework for Growth, was the short and long-term impacts of a shrinking talent pool in Kansas. Our working age population decline is more rapid than the US trend and the trendlines in peer states. Our overall outmigration is also worse and we are losing our more highly educated citizens. Currently, Kansas' working population ranked 40th nationally in 2018 and is projected to decline 2.3% by 2028. From 2016 to 2018, Kansas lost over 9,000 residents with bachelor's degrees or higher and in 2018 the state ranked 39th in its retention of graduates.

We must begin to address these gaps by making the most of our state's untapped potential by integrating our talent, that may already exist in our state. Creating a program that helps get individuals back into school to get the necessary training and education in fields that are highly sought after, is great workforce development policy. Our State only stands to gain from an increase in highly skilled workers entering the workforce as the Department continues to work on bringing jobs and capital investment from around the world.

The reason the Department of Commerce is neutral on this bill, is there are multiple versions of this concept currently circulating the legislature. We are not experts in how to best implement this type of scholarship program, so we do not feel it is appropriate to take a stance on that specific item. We would encourage the sponsors and the committee to work with the many stakeholders on this issue, so the best possible proposal can come about. This includes who is covered, how much each eligible recipient can receive and what is the total cost of the program.

We appreciate Senator Holland and Senator Baumgardner bringing this important issue to light and we look forward to the continued discussion on how we can improve our State's workforce.