



To: Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Steve Kearney, Executive Director

Date: June 4, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Liability

Chairman Wilborn and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on COVID-19 liability concerns. The Kansas Association of Technical Colleges (KTC) is a seven-college consortium promoting career and technical education in Kansas. We provide high wage/high-demand, high-skilled and often critical need technical education to our students to meet the needs of Kansas business and industry. Our focus is workforce development, demonstration of skills and competencies to meet industry-recognized credentials, and helping our students become productive citizens and employees in our communities and in the state; they become consumers, taxpayers, and reinforce the direct, rapid return on investment of our resources to the state's economy.

On behalf of the members of KTC we offer our support for limited liability protection for postsecondary educational institutions related to COVID-19. We view this as a necessary step in order for technical colleges to continue to provide high quality educational opportunities for students in Kansas. We have seen numerous class action lawsuits filed across the country against higher education institutions for altering their services in order to accommodate the protections of staff and students due to COVID-19.

Our circumstances may be even more serious as our programs do not necessarily translate well into an online environment. Frankly, it's hard to teach welding without actually doing some welding. In order to teach our students job-ready skills, we continue to stay open and will need to in the future. That means we will be providing instruction in person. Without limited liability we may be forced to reevaluate what programs we can provide, and if we have to limit access, that will have the downstream effect of not providing skilled workers to businesses in our communities. We are local and regional educational institutions; our graduates by and large stay in Kansas because we teach skills that are in demand for the Kansas economy.

Demand continues to increase for technical workforce education. Kansas Technical Colleges drove enrollment increases in the Kansas higher education system in the fall 2019 semester, with an increase of 2.86% in full-time equivalency enrollment (with a 5-year increase of 24.98% in FTE), and 5.67% in headcount enrollment growth (with a 5-year increase of 42.47% in headcount)-KBOR data. Washburn Institute of Technology (4.91%), Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology

(4.4%), and Manhattan Area Technical College (3.61%) led the state in FTE growth. Manhattan Area Technical College (16.3%), North Central Kansas Technical College (7.93%), and Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology (7.05%) led the state with headcount enrollment increases.

We achieved this level of growth because our Kansas Technical Colleges are some of the most highly ranked in the nation. 150 two-year colleges identified by the Aspen Institute were recognized for excellence by the Institute, 9 from Kansas, 5 of the 9 were technical colleges: MATC, NCKT, FHTC, NWKTC, and SATC. In addition, WalletHub released their 2019 ranking of two-year colleges. Over 700 institutions were evaluated on cost, student outcomes and career outcomes. Not all two-year institutions are evaluated by the financial services company. In this year's ranking, MATC is again #1 among the 18 Kansas two-year colleges who were ranked, Pratt #2 (Pratt and MATC have traded off the #1 and #2 state positions for five years). MATC was 56<sup>th</sup> nationally, and Pratt was 64<sup>th</sup>. 16 other Kansas two-year colleges were ranked nationally between # 292 and #632.

A Georgetown University report on the return on investment of higher education analyzed data on 4,500 colleges and universities in the United States. In Kansas, technical colleges net present value through 40 years of employment in the state provided equal value as was gained in a university education. Washburn Institute of Technology , Manhattan Area Technical College and North Central Kansas Technical College were in the top five public higher education institutions in the state for that value.

We are driving skilled technical workforce education in the state, providing a rapid, direct return on investment as the vast majority of the students remain in Kansas as employees, taxpayers, and consumers as they usually have no-to-low student debt. *The technical colleges provide this performance without any local taxing authority. They also do this while receiving the least amount of higher education support from appropriations of any entity within education and higher education in the state.*

Thank you for your continued support and recognition of technical education and workforce development in Kansas. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on this very critical issue.