



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2101  
Senate Ways & Means Committee  
March 22, 2021

Chairman Billinger and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the nearly 3,000 business members of the METL Coalition, the Chambers of Commerce of Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, and Lawrence would like to express their full support of HB 2101, which would extend the University Engineering Initiative Act for another ten years.

This workforce initiative, developed at the urging of the Kansas business community, was designed to increase the number of annual engineering graduates from our states three research universities - the University of Kansas, Kansas State, and Wichita State University. Administered by the Department of Commerce, this initiative has been extremely successful and exceeded its goal of creating a combined 1,365 engineering graduates in 2021. However, demand from the private sector for engineering graduates still far outstrips supply as more than 70% of private sector engineering firms indicate that they are not able to hire enough engineers.

This initiative receives \$10.5M annually from ELARF funds, evenly divided among the three universities. It is important to note that these are *not* State General Funds *and* there is a matching component from the Universities General Operating Fund. Due to expire in 2022, HB 2101 would extend the University Engineering Initiative Act for another ten years while requiring that the three universities maintain the targeted engineer graduate rate during that period. Given that we are in a national recession and still not meeting the demand for these graduates from the private sector, this is an investment makes sense.

Please support House Bill 2101.

Respectfully,

METL - The Chambers of Commerce of Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, and Lawrence