



Testimony to Missouri House Appropriations-Education Subcommittee

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Representative Rowland and Members of the Missouri House Subcommittee on Appropriations-Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as you consider appropriations to further the educational goals of Missouri and its residents. Over the past several months, members of the St. Louis Graduates Steering Committee have travelled our state to meet with legislators in their home districts. Our visits have included conversations with many of you, and, in some cases, included area school superintendents and school board members in your communities. Our intent in these visits was to understand the issues in communities across our state and how they might differ from, or be aligned with, issues we see for students in the St. Louis area.

We learned some things in these meetings that we would like to share with you today as you begin to consider appropriations to support education in Missouri in the 2019 fiscal year.

First, poverty is acutely present in every community we visited. It may look different in Versailles and Forsyth than it does in St. Louis and Normandy, but the challenges of unemployment, underemployment, and the social and health consequences of both are weighing on our rural and urban communities alike. *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* recent article, "A Dying Town", held up Kennett, Missouri, as an example of rural communities where lack of educational opportunities correlates with dire health outcomes. In St. Louis, a report by For the Sake of All documented the disparities in life expectancy between neighboring low-income and wealthy communities. Postsecondary education – or the lack of it – is a driver in that disparity. While "college" may not be the answer for every high school student, it appears that "post-secondary education" and training should be the goal for every young person in our state.

Second, there are smart and hard-working people across this state working to support young people so they can provide for themselves as adults and stay in our state. In our travels, we heard an emphasis on connecting students to careers and engaging employers in preparing them for jobs. Missouri students need chances to earn certificates and degrees that enable them to advance in careers here.

We believe Missouri's greatest opportunity lies in increasing post-secondary education for students across the state for whom education beyond high school could have the most significant and life-changing impact. To this end, we ask you to consider the following as you review budget appropriations this year:

1. **Prioritize Access Missouri funding.** As the state's need-based scholarship program, Access Missouri provides awards to significantly more students than any other state aid program. Yet the approximately 45,000 students who receive Access Missouri awards,

students who have demonstrated financial need, are struggling to attend college. Access Missouri student award amounts have decreased at a time when the costs of higher education have increased and financial aid gaps are growing. The best investment for Missouri to support students in post-secondary education is Access Missouri.

2. **Enable in-state tuition for undocumented students.** For the past three years, Missouri's higher education budget has included language that requires that students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) be charged out-of-state or international tuition rates. Despite growing up in the U.S. and graduating from Missouri high schools, students with DACA are being held back in their efforts to continue their education, support themselves and their families, and contribute to our state. Charging them a higher tuition rate than their peer high school graduates is simply punitive.

3. **Support the Allan Purdy Work-Study program.** The work-study program Rep. Kendrick has proposed in HB 1275 connects students to career pathways. This program proposes to bring together employers, higher education and high schools in a collaborative effort to support students and communities. We support further research on the fiscal implications of this policy, and we believe this innovative approach has great potential for Missouri students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these thoughts to the Subcommittee on Appropriations-Education. We appreciate the difficult decisions before the Missouri Legislature this session. Please call on us for counsel if we can further assist in your thinking.

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