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By First Class Mail and Email

August 29, 2025

The Honorable Stephen West
The Honorable Scott Lewis
The Honorable James Tipton
Interim Joint Committee on Education
Kentucky General Assembly
c/o Jay Hartz
Director, Legislative Research Commission
700 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

RE: House Bill 4 Report

Gentlemen:

This constitutes the report of Northern Kentucky University (NKU) regarding its compliance with House Bill 4 (2025 Ky. Acts 120, § 17).

NKU's Compliance with House Bill 4

At its regular meeting on June 11, 2025, NKU's Board of Regents certified the institution's compliance with House Bill 4. Going forward, NKU will ensure that its operations remain in compliance with the law.

Over the last several months, NKU has taken the following steps to address these requirements:

DEI Office: In August 2024, months before House Bill 4 was enacted, NKU dissolved its Office of Inclusive Excellence and the associated vice president position. Earlier this year, NKU also dissolved its Center for Student Inclusiveness and the associated offices housing African-American Student Initiatives, Latino Student Initiatives, and LGBTQ+ Student Initiatives, as well as the associated positions and programs.

Academic Courses: NKU invested significant effort to review and ultimately confirm that none of its courses reflect the “indoctrination” prohibited by House Bill 4. Over the summer, NKU evaluated information relating to approximately 2,000 courses and determined that our offerings comply with the law. NKU will continue these reviews each year to verify compliance.

In addition to its legal responsibilities, NKU has a responsibility to inspire our students to question, debate, and explore, both in and out of the classroom. The “indoctrination” described in House Bill 4 would be incompatible with this responsibility and our mission.

Statement of Core Values: This spring, NKU conducted a campus-wide poll and, based on the results, adjusted the language of its Statement of Core Values to affirm that NKU “will foster a community of belonging where individuals are valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.”

External Groups and Events: NKU implemented new spending rules to avoid expenditures that support external groups and events that are primarily intended to serve members or attendees based on their race, sex, or similar characteristic.

Employee Groups: NKU dissolved its Inclusive Excellence Council and all of its employee affinity groups, including a small number that had been organized around demographic categories. The NKU Foundation also re-organized the manner in which it engages alumni, resulting in the dissolution of the Black Alumni Council and the Young Alumni Council.

Diversity Statements; Training: NKU has reviewed its employment and admission application materials to ensure that none solicit views regarding race, sex, or other categories or require any related pledge or affirmation. Similarly, NKU has reviewed its campus training modules to ensure that they do not promote differential treatment based on those categories.

Scholarships: NKU and its supporting foundation have ceased award of privately funded scholarships that included a restriction or preference for a particular race, sex, or other category. NKU staff are taking measures to ensure that these funds can be awarded according to legally compliant criteria, including by working with donors to revise the terms of gift agreements. NKU also modified the name of one institutional scholarship to more clearly communicate that it is awarded without consideration of race or other categories.

Student Organizations: NKU revised its student organization policies to ensure that student-led organizations remain eligible for broad-based institutional funding that is allocated without regard to race and other categories, in furtherance of

students' own expressive and associational rights, while avoiding the more targeted institutional support prohibited by the law.

Other House Bill 4 Requirements: NKU did not previously consider race or other characteristics in making undergraduate admissions, employment, or contracting decisions. No adjustments were required in these areas.

New Campus Initiatives: Alongside the changes described above, NKU also has seized new opportunities to broaden support for our entire campus community. For students, beginning with the 2025-26 academic year, NKU has launched the Norse Center for Belonging, which focuses on mentoring and creating connections for the entire student community, including first-generation and commuter students. This work is not directed to specific groups of students based on race, sex, or other identity categories. Staff from the former Center for Student Inclusiveness have been re-assigned to the new Norse Center.

For employees, NKU has created the Campus Community Council, which will advise on matters of importance to all employees, particularly related to creation of a vibrant and engaged campus community.

Free Expression and Intellectual Diversity

At its June 2025 meeting, NKU's Board of Regents reaffirmed the institution's commitment to intellectual diversity and viewpoint neutrality by adopting the following statement:

NKU is committed to offering an excellent education in which scholars engage in a robust exchange of ideas, critique theories and test assumptions, challenge the unexamined, produce creative works, and welcome thoughtful dissent – all in service of our shared search for truth and new knowledge. Our University embraces intellectual diversity and the informed expression and probing of ideas from all perspectives, which are essential to the vitality of our institution and the preparation of our students.

In keeping with this commitment, the University will not discriminate against an individual on the basis of the individual's political or social viewpoint.

In furtherance of those values, NKU will continue to sponsor programs, events and campus initiatives that both advocate for and model the importance of free expression and debate, including through NKU's own Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement.

Faculty Hiring and Retention Strategies

NKU recently refreshed its procedures for faculty search committees, to ensure that committees reflect the variety of viewpoints and specialties that thrive on our campus and that committee members understand their obligation to avoid unlawful discrimination in making those important decisions. Among other things, NKU specifically instructs committees to avoid inappropriate questions about candidates' political affiliations. To retain faculty, NKU offers institutional support through mentoring circles, leadership institutes, celebrations of success, and interdisciplinary social gatherings.

Please contact me if you require more information about the items described in this report or NKU's efforts to ensure compliance with House Bill 4.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cady Short-Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Cady Short-Thompson, Ph.D.
President

cc: Attorney General Russell Coleman (by first class mail)