

Testimony before the
House Education Committee

On

HB 2139

By

**Alexis Villagran, Hispanic American Leadership Organization Student Senator
University of Kansas
24 February 2015**

Mr. Chairman, Members of Committee:

My name is Alexis Villagran and I am a student at the University of Kansas. When my parents came to America, they had a brighter future in mind. Not necessarily for themselves, but for me, my sister and my little brother. I was fortunate enough to have been born here in America, and am extremely proud to be from Southwest Kansas. Growing up in Southwest Kansas taught me what it meant to be a Kansan. Everyone that I knew worked extremely hard for their community and for what they had. For you see, it is these virtues that makes us Kansans.

I am here today to say that it is not a piece of paper that separates us from the rest of the world. People that would be affected by this bill are not just “aliens” but are Kansans that exemplify what it means to be one. In my time in Southwest Kansas, I was also blessed to be surrounded by a diverse pool of culture, in my hometown of Garden City. It is here that I learned that these “aliens” were just like me. I grew up with them. They were my neighbors, my friends and my family. You see, the reality of this situation is they were not foreigners to our community.

I learned that they too had dreams just like mine. Dreams to become successful, start a family and be productive members of society. Unfortunately, it is legislation like this that puts those very dreams in peril. Without in-state tuition many Kansans will see their dreams come to an end. College will simply become unaffordable. Many would be forced to drop-out and potentially leave the state. In addition, this would have effects beyond just undocumented college Kansans. The message this would send to the rest of the immigrant population is a message of exclusion and of fear. In a time in which many college Kansans are building their foundation for their lives the last thing on everyone’s mind here should be how we can take that away.

With that said, I implore everyone present today to look within themselves and ask what this bill is really doing. Whose dreams are going to end? The goal of this bill is to make “aliens” pay out of state tuition but the truth is they are not “aliens”. They are our neighbors, they are our friends, they are our community, and they are Kansans.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I pray that his body uses its power to legislate in a way that will protect the dreams of those who need it the most.

- Alexis Villagran
Hispanic American Leadership Organization Student Senator, University of Kansas