

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Beatriz Jimenez-Quiroga and I am writing to you today to express my concern about House Bill 2139, which takes away in-state tuition from undocumented students. I was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and was brought to the United States by my parents at the age of 9. Since then I have lived in Salina, Kansas. I graduated from Hawthorne Elementary School, Salina South Middle school, and Salina Central High School. I spent my entire childhood in Salina and it's the place I know to be home.

As a young girl, I wanted to grow up to be a teacher. All through high school counselors and teachers encouraged me to attend college. I followed the recommendations by my counselor to take four years of math and science. I worked hard to get good grades and did everything to assure my admission. When I became a senior in high school I remember coming home from school with a list of colleges I wanted to apply to. My parents broke the news to me that I could not apply because of my undocumented status in the United States. I felt crushed, but that did not stop me from asking what I could do. I confided to my counselor whom at the time said some powerful words that I live by today, which are "where there is a will, there is a way." Being able to pay in-state tuition meant I could afford college tuition. Even though I was paying the in-state rate, college was still expensive and my parents had to sacrifice many things for me to attend. There were many other obstacles that I faced being an undocumented student, but knowing that I could one day be a college graduate encouraged me to keep working through them. Last May, I graduated from Fort Hays State University with a degree in Sociology and I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Kansas. Working towards this goal has helped me make good decisions, which kept me from getting into trouble and gave me a sense of purpose and direction.

I currently work for a non-profit organization which helps people apply for their citizenship and other immigration benefits. I enjoy the work I do because I am helping people accomplish what I greatly hope to do one day, and that is to become a U.S. Citizen. In order to qualify for instate tuition, I had to sign an affidavit promising that I would pursue a path to adjusting my status as soon as one becomes available to me. I take that promise seriously. I now am a Deferred Action recipient, which gives me work authorization follow my dream of becoming a social worker. And my sister, who is a U.S. citizen, has filed a petition on my behalf, but becoming a lawful permanent resident through her petition may take more than 20 years. I am waiting in line and doing my best to become a good citizen of the United States. I am still working towards my master's in Social Work; my goal is to become a Licensed Social Worker in the State of Kansas and hopefully work with the Department of Children and Families. Passing this bill will hurt students like myself that are working towards a degree that can help improve our communities and contribute to the great state of Kansas. Please say NO to Bill 2139.

Sincerely,

Beatriz Jimenez-Quiroga