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*LICENSED IN KANSAS AND MISSOURI

February 22, 2015

DELIVERED VIA HAND DELIVERY

Re: Opposition to House Bill 2139

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Education Committee:

As a Trustee at Johnson County Community College, I take great pride that we not only serve our county, but northeast Kansas, and much of the rest of Kansas including many undocumented immigrants qualifying for in-state tuition. Moreover, as a lifelong Kansan who did not grow up in Johnson County, I love our community college(s) and Board of Regents Universities. These undocumented students enrich the lives of our students, help teach about the realities of geo-political issues, what economic refugees experience, and contribute to our economy (many of our sister schools dramatically need every student possible; taking away in-state tuition may cost Kansas Colleges students and much needed federal and state subsidy).

A government desperate to create jobs like Texas, eliminate income tax like Texas, would do well to follow Texas' example on allowing in-state tuition at Kansas universities and colleges for undocumented immigrants who graduate from an accredited Kansas high school. In a 2014 AP article Kimberly Hefling writes that Governor Rick Perry stated that those who opposed in-state tuition on this issue "did not have a heart."

Ms. Hefling's article also states that "[a]bout 65,000 students living illegally in the country graduate annually from high school and about 5 percent to 10 percent of them go to college, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities has estimated." With approximately 1% of the U.S. population, that would put Kansas' number of affected students at 650 or so. In 2012, 513 of these students were in community colleges in Kansas. See Steven J. Anderson, Division of the Budget, "Fiscal Note for HB 2192 by House Committee on Federal and State Affairs."

II

2010: MEMBER OF A LEGAL TEAM NAMED

A TRIAL LAWYER OF THE YEAR FINALIST BY THE PUBLIC JUSTICE FOUNDATION;

2014: NAMED ONE OF THE TOP 40 UNDER 40 LITIGATION ATTORNEYS IN THE STATE OF KANSAS BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LEGAL ADVOCATES.

Any argument about fiscal cost is misguided because, as recently as 2012, this body estimated that 513 of these students were attending our community colleges and only 117 were attending a four year university. This is an exceedingly small portion of our state budget and the fiscal impact to the state is negligible, while the potential economic impact of educating 600 plus students is high and a sound investment for our state. Even though these students still have difficulties finding jobs and living in Kansas for various reasons, college graduates earn more, can better work to support themselves and their families, and serve as role models and leaders in their communities.

Just as any American Dream requires, this opportunity allows law abiding youth to work, and learn to do for themselves, rather than off of the metaphoric fishing of others. Specifically, if we give opportunity to undocumented immigrants who grow up believing they are a Kansan (most likely Christian if Latino, but their religion is irrelevant just noted here) they will likely cost the government less money if they can work for themselves rather than live off the social safety compact. Moreover, in-state tuition largely means that the student simply may borrow money through student loans to attend school. Thus, a student benefitting under the existing law will continue to fuel our economy by earning an education, finding employment, living, and paying back student loans to creditors.

Not only do these students work in the service industry, but many help lay the foundation for our civil society and become leaders in the law or in business. I do not need to remind this Legislature that immigrants (undocumented or otherwise) have fought and died in every American War, and certainly helped save western civilization during World War II. The point is that we do not know where the next good idea will come from, and we should help educate those who want to learn. We should especially help those who spent their childhood believing in the American Dream.

In conclusion, I request that the 2004 law remains in place, and unaltered.

Thank you for your service, and everything you do for Kansas and JCCC.

Best personal regards,

Lee Cross
Trustee
Johnson County Community College

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