

TESTIMONY OF  
REPRESENTATIVE JOHN ALCALA

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"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" - Is one of the most powerful lines written by Emma Lazarus in her poem "New Colossus" and is engraved on the Statue of Liberty. In one sentence Lazarus sums up the immigration experience that for generations has defined the travels – by boat, train, car, or on foot – of people yearning for a small piece of the American dream.

America has been the beckoning call for adults willing to work and sacrifice. Throughout the generations the new Americans have navigated the new travelled terrain with children in tow. The immigrant desire for work, home, future was not to be outdone by the belief in their child's ability to receive an education.

How many times have we all heard, "We are ALL immigrants!!" That phrase echoes frequently as remembering our COLLECTIVE history calls out against a frenzied debate on immigration – full of half truths and stirred up at a time in our country and STATE that is increasingly polarized and looking for someone to blame. And the blame once again, the target, the scapegoat, is most vulnerable and lacking in protection are the undocumented youth. What is their fault and point of attack for critics? Well it seems to me the attack is based on trying to better themselves - which is what we want all our youth in America to aspire to. Yet here we are again engaging in the same battle of denial to the DREAMERS.

HB2139 should not pass. It is a bill based on narrow-minded views placing blame on youth that had no say or choice when coming to this country. They are getting nothing for FREE. Their stories and names, their past AND their future are already a part of Kansas' tapestry. The USA is a beacon of hope and we are continually reminded family values help bind us together as a nation. How then can we logically and seriously espouse the values of a caring state and nation - yet as quickly be at the ready to strip young people of their achievements? Of their hopes? Our state is better than this law – individually and collectively we remember who we are. The same goals, dreams, possibilities *you want for your children and grandchildren* living in this land of prosperity – is *absolutely no different* than what the parents of DREAMERS want for their own offspring and the youth want and yearn for themselves. DREAMERS have the right, the investment in our state to be able to breathe – free – without fear of continued attack and prejudice.