

SB254 Written Only Proponent Testimony

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

SB254 is about ensuring fairness, prioritizing Kansas taxpayers, and reinforcing the importance of following the law when it comes to public benefits and legal processes.

There may be concerns that SB 254 creates unnecessary barriers or unfairly impacts certain groups, but that is not the case. Kansas has always welcomed those who come here legally, work hard, and contribute to our communities. This bill does not change that—it simply ensures that public resources are distributed fairly and in accordance with the law. Benefits such as in-state tuition and state assistance programs are not unlimited, and it is reasonable to ensure that eligibility requirements are being followed.

Some may argue that limiting in-state tuition for undocumented students is unfair. But fairness must be considered in a broader sense. Currently, an out-of-state student from Oklahoma or Nebraska—who is a U.S. citizen—pays more than an undocumented student living in Kansas. That raises a fundamental question: should a student who is legally a U.S. citizen pay more than someone who is not legally present? In-state tuition is a privilege, not an automatic entitlement, and it should be reserved for those who meet proper legal qualifications.

There may also be concerns that this bill could negatively impact families or children. However, SB 254 does not remove benefits from those who are legally eligible—it simply ensures that programs operate within the legal framework. Public resources should be prioritized for those who qualify under existing federal and state law.

Regarding the criminal justice provisions, SB 254 introduces a rebuttable presumption of flight risk for noncitizens in certain cases. This does not mean automatic denial of bail. A rebuttable presumption simply means that immigration status is considered as one factor—just as judges currently assess other factors, such as prior offenses, employment stability, and community ties, when determining flight risk. This provision serves as a safeguard, not a punishment, ensuring that courts can make informed decisions.

Ultimately, SB 254 is about common sense, fairness, and consistency. It aligns state policies with federal law and ensures that benefits and legal processes are applied in a lawful and equitable manner. I respectfully urge the committee to support SB 254.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sedgwick County Precinct Committeewoman