

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

From: Amber Hruska

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 254 – Written Only

Date: 2/26/25

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

As a lifelong Kansan, the daughter of a (Dutch) immigrant, and in my personal capacity as a student of public administration, I submit my written testimony in firm opposition to Senate Bill 254.

While the title of this bill suggests its purpose is to prohibit unauthorized immigrants from receiving state and local public benefits, I feel it is pertinent to point out that this is already prohibited under federal law. On that basis alone, I believe this legislation is unnecessary. However, there are other aspects of this bill that I find problematic.

I am concerned that the additional verification procedures proposed will only increase bureaucratic red tape, cost taxpayers more of our hard-earned money, and create significant barriers for vulnerable populations who are otherwise eligible for services and benefits such as SNAP or childcare assistance. Rather than preventing unauthorized immigrants from receiving a gallon of milk, we risk creating delays and obstacles for residents in need—such as single parents seeking timely access to food and childcare. The proposed verification process may also create unnecessary delays for those unable to access certain documentation.

Furthermore, revoking in-state tuition for undocumented students will ultimately not benefit any of us. College is already prohibitively expensive, and as a non-traditional student, I understand this firsthand. I juggle work, family, and volunteer commitments while taking classes that cost my family \$365 per credit hour, plus additional fees. Last year, my spouse earned his master's degree at an out-of-state institution, for which we paid a discounted rate of around \$800 per credit hour, again - not including the additional fees. Undocumented students who meet strict criteria, including three years of attendance and graduation from an accredited Kansas high school, are already investing in their education at the same rates that I pay. Lacking social security numbers, they already do not qualify for financial aid. This investment reflects their commitment to becoming Kansans and contributing to our state's future workforce. Raising

tuition for these students will not lower my tuition costs. Instead, it creates one more barrier that prevents them from fully contributing to Kansas' prosperity.

Requiring proof of lawful presence for all public benefits could place a significant administrative burden on state and local agencies, diverting resources away from other essential functions. The verification process may also lead to delays and errors, potentially affecting residents who face challenges providing necessary documentation. Furthermore, the bill does not clarify which agencies are subject to these provisions. For example, will domestic violence shelters or food banks, which receive grants, be required to undergo this cumbersome verification process?

Finally, this bill assumes that immigration status automatically correlates to a flight risk, which opens the door to extended detainment without due process. It could lead to costly legal challenges—in an area in which our state's current attorney general has not had a particularly successful track record.

Good public policy is clear, evidence-based, and addresses public problems in a way that is fair, transparent, and respectful of our Constitution. I come to you with the understanding that you ran for office because you care deeply about our state, want to make a difference, and believe in creating good policy. With all due respect, I believe this bill fails on all counts as sound public policy. Therefore, I respectfully urge the committee to vote no on Senate Bill 254.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amber Hruska

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