

Date: February 27, 2025

Bill number: SB 254

Opponent

Forrest Ehmke, Immigration Support Services Network

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Today I am speaking against SB 254. There are many reasons to be against this bill, however, I will share with you one person's personal experience with obtaining in-state tuition.

I grew up in a small town in western Kansas, where every student participated in some type of extracurricular activity. Playing sports throughout middle and high school instilled in me a sense of discipline and competitiveness that I carry with me today.

The moment I knew I wanted to go to college came during my sophomore year of high school when I attended volleyball camp at Colby Community College. A girl from my high school had gone there to play volleyball, and after the camp, we watched her scrimmage with the team. I remember being in awe of her. It was then that I realized I could go beyond high school too—not just in sports, but in academics. Later, I attended another juco college, where I earned a Presidential Scholarship, joined the cheerleading team, and became a Resident Assistant.

I was able to pay for most of my education through merit, but I would not have been able to enroll without in-state tuition for undocumented students. Having an education made applying for DACA much easier, and because of DACA, I had the opportunity to transfer to Wichita State University. Today, I am close to earning my master's in business administration.

I am an active member of my community, serving as an advisor to a sorority at a Wichita State University, previously volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and mentoring a student from Friends University. I recently bought my first home. My life is simple but fulfilling, and I take pride in contributing positively to my community and those around me.

My parents only had an elementary school education, yet in just one generation, I have elevated our family's educational attainment to a master's degree—one I hope to complete this year. Throughout my academic journey, I did not qualify for FAFSA or government loans, so I have no student debt. Every dollar invested in my education has come from merit-based scholarships and, primarily, my own pocket.

My question to the committee is: Should students have the chance to become productive citizens, as I believe I have, or should we take away their opportunities and leave them with only the limited prospects a high school education can provide?

Thank you for listening to this story of the American dream that our ancestors have had for us.