

SARAH BALDERAS

PRIVATE CITIZEN

2/19/2025

SB 254

ORAL WEBEX

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 254 with you today. My name is Sarah Balderas and I am a voter in Sedgwick County. I am writing today to encourage the committee to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans and vote no on SB 254.

This bill would hurt our state and local economies if noncitizens were not allowed to pay in-state tuition. We would have Kansas residents (people of all legal or non-legal status) leaving the state to study elsewhere, which means that they would be less inclined to stay in Kansas and eventually further their career in Kansas. We already have a problem with students leaving Kansas after they graduate high school. We want to encourage people who are contributors to the economy to stay in Kansas. I see only negatives when I think about getting rid of in-state tuition for noncitizens. Noncitizens are not allowed to ask for federal or state aid to pay for college. The money they are paying for higher education is coming out of their own pockets. If noncitizens are paying in-state tuition, they are going to be more likely to contribute more to the state and local economy. I know the typical argument is that if we offer a benefit to noncitizens, then noncitizens will flock to the US or our state. Simply offering in-state tuition to noncitizens will not drastically increase the number of people coming to Kansas. We're not encouraging illegal entry into the US by offering in-state tuition. Who knows, maybe with a higher education, someone with no status could adjust to lawful status through an employer in the future. But they might never know if they are forced to pay out of state tuition. Our state will suffer if we get rid of in-state tuition for noncitizens. If the sentiment is that people should simply become citizens or get lawful status, then I'm happy to explain why that is a very ignorant outlook on this issue.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 254 to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans. Thank you.