

Sofia Jimenez

PRIVATE CITIZEN

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SB 254

WRITTEN ONLY

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for allowing me to share my thoughts on SB 254 with you today. My name is Sofia Jimenez, and I live in Wyandotte County. I am writing to encourage the committee to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans and vote no on SB 254.

I remember my move-in day at K-State like it was yesterday. Coincidentally, move-in day happened to land on my 18th birthday, and it remains one of the best birthdays of my life. I remember vividly the newfound freedom I felt walking to Hale Library for the first time and feeling amazed by the newness of the wealth of knowledge at my disposal. Kansas State University had been my dream school since I started considering pursuing a degree. While my college years continue to be some of the best of my life, I also remember how hard it was to pay for school.

Despite being in the top 10 GPAs of my high school graduating class, a National Honor Society scholar, a Kansas Honor Student, and exceeding academically, obtaining my degree never felt certain. This uncertainty was directly tied to the cost of school. While my socioeconomic status made me eligible for financial aid, and my academic record for a vast pool of scholarships - I had a barrier out of my control. I am an undocumented student in the state of Kansas, limiting my eligibility for financial aid and my ability to apply for student loans. As I have highlighted, I went above and beyond to prepare myself to meet higher education's academic standards and be a competitive student worthy of a degree from a university in my state of Kansas. Like me, there are many undocumented students in our state dreaming of having their names on diplomas from in-state universities.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, background, and place of birth, ALL Kansans deserve the opportunity to reach educational milestones and improve their futures. Offering in-state tuition to Kansas undocumented residents does not mean giving anyone preferential treatment. Instead, it allows all Kansans to invest in local schools and, in turn, enrich our state academically and economically.

With all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities that my diploma conferred on me, I implore you to consider the benefits of an educated population, a strong workforce, and a state with academic opportunities for all.

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