

February 25, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

The core of our immigrant communities has always been family. Many immigrant parents came to the United States in pursuit of greater opportunities for their children, particularly in education an opportunity they themselves were often denied in their home countries.

I write today in strong opposition to Bill 254, as it presents yet another obstacle to higher education, a vital pathway to individual success and community progress. Increasing financial barriers will not only hinder students' ability to pursue college but will also deprive Kansas of a skilled and educated workforce. Immigrants have long played a crucial role in strengthening our communities, revitalizing neighborhoods, and contributing to the economic and cultural fabric of our cities. Many of these students go on to become healthcare workers, educators, and business owners, directly investing back into our state. Restricting access to education threatens that progress, forcing talented young individuals out of Kansas at a time when we need them most.

A thriving Kansas depends on fostering opportunity for all who call this state home. Research consistently shows that investing in education leads to long-term economic benefits, including higher wages, increased tax contributions, and a stronger economy. Other states that have embraced policies supporting immigrant students have seen positive outcomes, from higher college enrollment to workforce retention. Kansas has already made strides in the right direction by allowing qualifying undocumented students to pay in-state tuition. Reversing that progress would not only hurt these students but also undermine Kansas's commitment to building a strong, educated, and diverse community.

Many of these students were brought to the U.S. as children and have known no other home. They are students, volunteers, mentors, and professionals actively contributing to our society despite the barriers they face. Bill 254 sends a message that their hard work and aspirations are not valued, punishing them for circumstances beyond their control. Instead of closing doors, we should be investing in their future, just as they are eager to invest in Kansas.

I urge you to oppose Bill 254 and recognize the far-reaching impact of this legislation. Kansas has long been a state that values education and opportunity. Let's continue to build on that foundation rather than turning our backs on students who want nothing more than a chance to succeed and give back to the place they call home.

Thank you,

Arely Navarrete