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SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 254

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee:

I am honored to testify today as a Trustee of Johnson County Community College in **strong opposition to Senate Bill 254**. As an institution committed to serving not just Johnson County but northeast Kansas and beyond, we recognize the immense value that **all Kansas high school graduates—including undocumented students—bring to our colleges, communities, and workforce**.

As a lifelong Kansan who did not grow up in Johnson County, I have a deep appreciation for our **community colleges and Board of Regents universities as engines of opportunity**. These institutions exist to **empower Kansas students with education and career pathways**, regardless of their background. Denying in-state tuition to students who have lived, studied, and graduated from Kansas High Schools would be a **devastating loss—not just for these students, but for our state as a whole**.

From an economic perspective, **Kansas colleges need students**— If we strip away in-state tuition eligibility, we risk **losing students not just from our classrooms, but from our future workforce**. These students do not qualify for federal financial aid and already **pay entirely out-of-pocket**, meaning that even with in-state tuition, they are **contributing directly to the financial health of our colleges**. In fact, undocumented workers pay more money into our state and federal systems than they could ever possibly collect. The alternative—pushing them out of higher education—would **harm enrollment and reduce the state and federal funding allocated to Kansas institutions**.

Furthermore, these students are **not asking for special treatment**. They have grown up in Kansas, attended our K-12 schools, and graduated alongside their peers. They are **simply asking for the opportunity to pay the same tuition rate as their classmates**, nothing more. Kansas law already requires them to be **actively working toward legal status as soon as they are able**.

We should be investing in our **state's future workforce, not building barriers to education**. Our economy needs **more skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and engaged community members—not fewer**. The best way to ensure a **strong, thriving Kansas** is to **keep our brightest students here, educated, and contributing to our communities**.

On another note, welcoming all races is good for business, and everyone should feel welcome to live, learn, earn, and spend their money in Kansas. Like Jesus, Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt, these human beings, and in many cases Christians, are simply seeking freedom from persecution. Consequently, we should welcome them, teach them, so they can learn and earn a good job, pay taxes, and contribute to the American Dream.

For these reasons, I **urge you to reject Senate Bill 254** and continue Kansas' commitment to educational access, economic growth, and workforce development.

Thank you for your service, and everything you do for Kansas and JCCC.

Respectfully,

/s/ Gerald Lee Cross, Jr.

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