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Xavier Carrasco Cooper, Student, Bishop Seabury Academy

Written testimony in opposition to SB 254

Lawrence Kansas

Members of the Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

Thank you for your work in making our state better. My name is Xavier Carrasco Cooper, and I am a high school junior from Lawrence, Kansas. I am writing to express my opposition to SB 254 and the harmful effects it will have on Kansans.

Undocumented immigrants are a fact of life in Kansas. That does not mean it is okay to immigrate illegally, but for every taller wall you build people will find an even taller ladder. The people that have come to stay here will not leave when you deny them reduced education. They will not give up when things get hard. Instead, this bill will trap people in a cycle of poverty that will only lead to your biggest fear: criminal undocumented immigrants.

Higher education leads to higher average salaries. That is a fact. Many immigrants who come here are impoverished. That is also a fact. Many people rely on state aid to afford higher education and learn skills that will gain them more pay and bring them out of poverty. When people earn more money, they spend more money, benefiting both corporations and consumers alike.

The alternative to this, no education, will only end in an impoverished Kansas. Many will find no hope in affording an education, and so our brightest minds, who have historically been immigrants, will be forced to work paycheck to paycheck at unskilled jobs. A lack of education leads to less pay, less pay leads to less spending money, which hurts both the consumer and corporations.

Even more dangerous, impoverished people are more likely to commit crimes. The people spouting myths about the “violent illegal” should not be voting on legislation that only perpetuates this. When people are economically depressed, they do not have many options. When people do not have many options, they often turn towards less than legal activities.

An uneducated Kansas is a poor Kansas. It may seem counterintuitive, but stomping out a problem will only make it worse. There will always be undocumented immigrants in Kansas, but the question becomes, do you want a forward thinking and prosperous Kansas? Or do you want a violent Kansas of people working for pennies a day.

When you make this decision, consider the past president. President H.W. Bush, a staunch Republican, supported public education for undocumented immigrants. They, after all,

lived in the same neighborhoods as us and deserve the same benefits as us. The right to education is fundamental to our principles, and everyone deserves the same chances in furthering it.

I hope that you all will make the right decision for Kansas to keep our state happy, prosperous, and safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with the committee,
Xavier Carrasco Cooper