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Private Citizen from Liberal, KS  
Written Opponent Testimony of SB 254  
For the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

February 27th, 2025

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 Kathleen Alonso and I am a voter in Seward County. I am writing today to encourage the committee to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans and vote no on SB 254.

I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity, and my thoughts and opinions do not reflect those of my employer(s). While I wear many hats, I want to highlight the roles most relevant to this bill. I currently serve as a Citizenship Instructor at Seward County Community College, where I also have the privilege of sponsoring the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO). In this role, I work with a diverse group of students, many of whom come from mixed-status families.

These students are deeply rooted in our communities—they volunteer, work local jobs, and support their families while excelling in their studies. Many of them plan to stay in Kansas, contributing to the very towns that raised them. In rural areas like Southwest Kansas, where maintaining a stable workforce is already a challenge, we rely on homegrown talent because we know that rural life isn't for everyone. Investing in these students means investing in the future of our communities, our schools, and our local economy.

Southwest Kansas has grown significantly over the past few decades due to the contributions of immigrant families. Liberal, Kansas, a rural town, now has the highest Hispanic population in the state, at 68.6%. This growth has brought many young Hispanic students through our school system, some of whom are undocumented. Yet, despite their dedication and hard work, these students face significant barriers to higher education. Denying them access to affordable tuition solely based on immigration status sends a harmful message—that Kansas does not welcome immigrants who aspire to pursue higher education and contribute to their communities.

Undocumented students are already ineligible for federal and state scholarships and grants. Providing them with affordable in-state tuition is not just a policy decision—it is a moral and compassionate one. These students have grown up in Kansas, call this state home, and deserve the opportunity to better themselves through education. Undocumented students are already ineligible for federal and state scholarships and grants. Providing them with affordable in-state tuition is not just a policy decision—it is a moral and compassionate one. These students have grown up in Kansas, call this state home, and deserve the opportunity to better themselves through education. Many of them stay in Kansas long after completing their education, working, raising families, and contributing to local economies for decades.

As a sponsor of HALO, my role is to support and develop Hispanic leaders, regardless of their immigration status. I have seen firsthand the talent, ambition, and passion these young adults bring to the world. Their dreams and contributions should be nurtured, not denied.

I urge you to support policies that expand educational access to all students who call Kansas home.