

Meleny Ewers

Private Citizen

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SB 254

WRITTEN ONLY

I am your constituent: Protect Educational Opportunity for All Kansas Immigrant Students

Dear Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

I am writing to you as a constituent in Kansas district 31 to urge you to oppose SB 254/HB 2373, which would repeal in-state tuition for all undocumented students and devastate the ability of higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations to serve vulnerable populations that help our Kansas communities thrive.

I was born and raised in the great state of Kansas and take great pride in giving back to the state that provided me with irreplaceable opportunities. Because of this, I cannot support and I ask you to please oppose SB 254/HB 2373 as this bill would not contribute to the well-being of the state. I have witnessed firsthand how undocumented peers, neighbors, and community leaders make this state incredible through their talents, skills, and educational training. Undocumented individuals uphold the Kansas values of grit, determination, and resilience while practicing gratitude for every opportunity they work to get. SB 254/HB 2373 would take away educational opportunities from undocumented students who claim and know Kansas as their ONLY home. These individuals are NOT "aliens." These undocumented students are future Kansas teachers, engineers, nurses, farmers, nonprofit leaders, accountants, bankers, and more. Our state will not win with the proposed bills, but will suffer tremendously.

The objective truth is that in-state tuition for these students is not a "handout." In my experience working with this population, these students must graduate from a Kansas high school, must fill out an affidavit, and must pay other fees to even be eligible to receive in-state tuition. It is a rigorous and lengthy process that these students go through to even get the opportunity to continue their education. The challenges don't end there, as these students are ineligible for any financial aid except for what comes from private donations and institutions. These opportunities

are rare, leaving students to cover the majority of their schooling and training expenses out-of-pocket.

I have watched friends and peers navigate this arduous journey, with many of them securing citizenship either just before or after graduation. As a result, they become engaged professionals and community leaders that make Kansas the best place to live in! However, these Kansas success stories can quickly come to a halt if SB 254/HB 2373 passes.

The fact of the matter is, our immigrant communities and the opportunity to achieve more through higher education are vital to the continued success of Kansas. From rural communities in western Kansas to the Missouri River, our state thrives when we welcome new faces that are dedicated to the prosperity of Kansas. Please prevent the repeal of in-state tuition for undocumented students by opposing SB 254/HB 2373. Thank you for your time.