

Danielle Gauna

PRIVATE CITIZEN

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SB 254

WRITTEN ONLY

Chair Thompson and committee members, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on SB 254. My name is Danielle Gauna, and I am a voter in Sedgwick County. I am writing today to encourage the committee to oppose SB 254 and protect educational opportunities that empower all Kansans to thrive

Initially, undocumented Kansans showed me their perseverance and strong work ethic in college. They received no grants and had limited scholarship opportunities. Yet they continued their studies, balancing their immigration status with rigorous coursework, community service, and the typical worries other undergraduate students experience. Affordable in-state tuition lessens their fears, enabling them to access higher education and become productive members of Kansas post-graduation. Economically, in-state tuition policies benefit Kansas. Increased enrollment brings more tuition revenue to schools and strengthens the Kansas workforce.

After graduation, many undocumented Kansans either pursue advanced degrees or enter the workforce in communities throughout Kansas, both urban and rural. They contribute to families and communities through jobs in language services, real estate, business, healthcare, and education.

Throughout my career, I have seen undocumented Kansans become U.S. citizens, continuing to contribute to Kansas. Their dedication to our state is undeniable. Labeling undocumented Kansans as "flight risks" disregards the strong community ties they have, especially those who graduate from Kansas high schools. These individuals consider Kansas their home and aspire to build their futures here.

Denying in-state tuition on the assumption that undocumented Kansans will leave increases barriers to higher education. SB 254 creates unnecessary obstacles to accessing education, limits workforce potential, and hinders economic growth.

Investing in undocumented Kansans strengthens Kansas as a whole. The success of undocumented Kansans is the success of Kansas.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your support for higher education for undocumented Kansans.