

February 27, 2025
Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
Opposition for SB 254

Chairman Senator Thompson and Members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong opposition to Senate Bill 254**. My name is **Courtney Eiterich**, and I serve as a **City Councilmember in Lenexa, Kansas** as well as teach high school to the future leaders in our state. Serving in these capacities gives me a first-hand look at how this bill is not only harmful to Kansas students and families—it also represents an alarming overreach into **local governance and Home Rule**, stripping municipalities of their ability to serve their communities effectively.

SB 254 Threatens Local Control and Home Rule

Kansas has a long tradition of **Home Rule**, recognizing that **local leaders are in the best position to make decisions that reflect the needs of their communities**. SB 254 disregards this principle entirely. This bill removes decision-making authority from **cities, counties, and local service providers** who understand and serve their communities best.

This means that even basic local services—services that residents rely on every day—could be disrupted or denied due to state-imposed bureaucratic barriers. **It is not the role of local agencies to enforce federal immigration law**, yet this bill forces them into that position, creating unnecessary red tape that will impact **all residents** seeking assistance.

Impact on Kansas Students and Higher Education

Beyond its attack on Home Rule, SB 254 would **bar undocumented Kansas high school graduates from receiving in-state tuition**, despite the fact that these students have lived here, studied here, and graduated from our schools.

Let me be clear: **these students are not receiving special treatment**. They are simply being given the opportunity to pay **full in-state tuition**, just like their peers, rather than being charged out-of-state rates that make higher education nearly impossible to afford. Since undocumented students **do not qualify for federal financial aid**, the financial burden is even greater for them. Removing in-state tuition **does not protect taxpayers—it prevents talented, hardworking young people from accessing an education and contributing to our communities**.

Kansas already faces a **workforce shortage** in key industries such as healthcare, education, and technology. SB 254 would **push some of our brightest students out of state or away from higher education altogether**, limiting our ability to grow a skilled workforce that strengthens our economy.

Economic and Community Impacts

Municipalities across Kansas rely on a well-educated, engaged, and thriving population. The **students impacted by this bill are future business owners, teachers, engineers, and community leaders**. Denying them the ability to afford college **reduces their economic potential and limits our state's long-term prosperity**.

Additionally, this bill **forces unnecessary verification processes onto local agencies**, slowing down public administration, increasing costs, and creating barriers for all Kansans—citizens and non-citizens alike—who need essential services. The unintended consequences of SB 254 will harm **local economies, hospitals, and service providers**, making it harder for municipalities to function efficiently.

Conclusion: SB 254 is Harmful and Unnecessary

SB 254 is a **costly, restrictive, and unnecessary bill** that strips local governments of their autonomy, **harms Kansas students**, and weakens our local economies. It **imposes burdensome state mandates on local agencies**, limits access to education, and **restricts local leaders from making the best decisions for their communities**.

I urge this committee to **reject SB 254** and protect **Home Rule, educational opportunity, and local decision-making**. Kansas communities deserve **policies that support students, businesses, and local governments—not restrictive, state-imposed mandates that harm our economy and workforce**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Courtney Eiterich