

Jose Lara

City of Liberal Mayor

2/26/2025

SB 254

Written only

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

My name is Jose Lara, and I am honored to serve as the Mayor of Liberal, Kansas. I am here today to voice my strong opposition to Senate Bill 254 because I believe it is not only harmful to the young people in our community but also detrimental to the future of our state.

Liberal is a city built on hard work, diversity, and opportunity. Our economy thrives because of the contributions of immigrants who have made Kansas their home, and our community is stronger because of the young people growing up in our schools, playing on our sports teams, and working hard toward a brighter future. The students who would be impacted by this bill are not outsiders—they are our neighbors, our friends, and for many of us, part of our extended families.

Removing in-state tuition for undocumented students would send the wrong message: that no matter how hard you work, no matter how much you contribute, you will never be fully accepted as part of Kansas. This is not the Kansas I know.

These students have grown up here, attended our schools, and already give back to our communities in countless ways. They deserve the same chance as their peers to continue their education and build a better future. They are not asking for handouts—they are asking for an opportunity to pay their fair share and earn a degree.

Many of our local businesses, including those in agriculture, healthcare, and skilled trades, need a well-educated workforce to sustain our economy. If we make it impossible for students in our own communities to access higher education, we are not just closing doors on them—we are closing doors on Kansas's future. The long-term impact of this bill would be fewer

skilled workers, fewer young professionals staying in our state, and fewer success stories that strengthen our local economies.

Liberal, like many towns across Kansas, depends on the next generation to keep our communities thriving. We should be investing in our young people, not discouraging them from pursuing an education that will allow them to contribute even more to our state.

I urge you to vote against SB 254 and stand for a Kansas that supports all of its students, rewards hard work, and builds a stronger future for us all.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of those who are directly impacted by this legislation.