

Dear Committee on State and Federal Affairs,

My mother and I came to the United States when I was three years old. I've attended school in America all my life and graduated a little late from Turner High school because I had my daughter at 17.

Up until that point school seemed like an unrealistic goal and I could not really see the necessity to further my education.

Having my child made me realize that even though I was undocumented, I was still in the United States--the Land of Opportunity. Where I can continue my education and provide my daughter with the essentials: a roof over her head, a proper education and a hard working and educated mother as a role model. Applying to Johnson County Community College was not an easy process for a first generation college student like me. I had to make multiple trips to provide them with the correct paperwork and with a newborn it was even harder to get all the paperwork together.

After signing the affidavit for in-state tuition and saving up for months, I was able to enroll in two classes and afford the materials for my classes. This helped me get a feel for what college was like and I started my way.

The pathway to legalization, however, was the hardest of all. It was years before I was even eligible to apply for my permanent residency through my step-father. Another obstacle was money. After working extremely hard, I was able to save enough money to finally pay for the application when I was 19. Fortunately I was under 21 and was able to receive my residency in less than a year. If not, I would probably still be waiting for a visa to be available. I have been fortunate enough to have fulfilled the requirements of the affidavit. However, I still stand here today as a supporter of Kansas in-state tuition. Taking away in-state tuition will handicap undocumented students in Kansas from being able to afford a college education while they wait for their opportunity to legalize. An educated population is good for Kansas.

Please stand with me in support of in-state tuition, in support of education and in support of a better future for Kansas.

Thank you,

Nubia Urena-Estefes