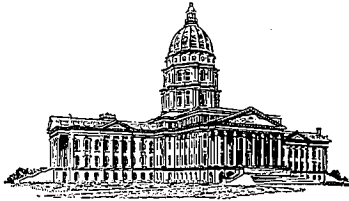


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Ponka-We Victors
Representative, 103rd District
Testimony in Opposition of H.B. 2139
House Education Committee
February 24, 2015

Chairman Representative Highland and members of the House Education committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to H.B. 2139, the repeal of in-state tuition for undocumented Kansas students.

In 2004, when this law passed it became a landmark piece of legislation. Now it seems every year since then we try to take this option away from students who are working hard to gain a quality education while contributing to our state. According to the Kansas Board of Regents in 2014, 651 undocumented students qualified for in-state tuition and have paid 1.7 million in tuition in fees. Today we are discussing, 0.25% of the whole 252,408 student population in Kansas. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this law and how important it is to our state. One of the qualifications for in-state tuition is undocumented students have had to attend a Kansas high school for 3 or more years, therefore Kansas has invested in these students. Most of these students have gone to school or graduated with our children and grandchildren. It would be a hypocrisy to overlook that many of these 651 students not only satisfy the requirement for in-state tuition but many have already contributed to the state through primary and secondary educational testing which fund the schools of our great state. It would be absurd to count them as Kansans kids for state education funding and then take away their opportunity to afford higher education. Most were brought to the U.S. as children by their parents and had no choice in their parent's decision to enter the United States. The law now helps undocumented students integrate into our workforce and society. Have we not learned from the past? Are we not a state in the greatest country of the world? Is Kansas not the "Home of the Brave"? The fear that resides in HB 2139 holds the implication that Kansas is limited in their quest for knowledge by state authority. This is not my Kansas. This is not the state that I love so much and work so diligently for. As a state we must show support, encouragement, compassion, and respect for our young and future leaders of Kansas. Let us now oppose this bill of fear and move forward with confidence and honor to those in search of knowledge, betterment, and prosperity. I believe we must work together to ensure that we have an educated workforce so it can reduce poverty and therefore we can compete economically with other states. I ask you to keep this commonsense approach to ensure our Kansas youth have affordable access to the training and education local businesses need.

Please oppose H.B. 2139 and don't punish these hardworking Kansas students for something they had no control over, "Ad Astra per Aspera" Help us prepare our future stars, through these difficulties regarding their education.

Sincerely,

Rep. Ponka-We Victors
Ponka-We Victors, District 103