

Dr. Marta Silva

Olathe School District educator of Spanish as a Heritage Language

Oral testimony to oppose SB 254

Senate Committee on Education

February 27, 2025

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Marta Silva and I am an immigrant educator in Olathe, married to an immigrant businessman. Our three children, first-generation immigrants, are pursuing careers in medicine, law, and business. Education has been the key to their success, and I believe it should be accessible to all, ensuring a fair and peaceful society.

For the past 20 years, I have had the privilege of teaching Spanish-speaking students and helping them secure scholarships and resources so they, too, can access opportunities. Each year, I proudly watch them graduate and pursue careers in college, the workforce, or the military. To me, they are simply students—young individuals striving for a future.

I stand before you today because Senate Bill SB 254 threatens this future. It will push the most vulnerable students away from education, stripping them of hope and increasing the risks of social instability. Before passing this bill, I ask you to consider:

- What should we, as educators, tell undocumented students about their college dreams?
- Should we lower our expectations for these students and just focus on the other students?
- Should we tell them to drop out at 16 because college's cost will be even more unattainable?
- Should we tell them to stop aspiring to be teachers, nurses, or professionals?

The biggest barrier to higher education is not intellect but affordability. This bill will only make it harder for students to access opportunities, leaving us with a society of uneducated youth. Is that truly what we want?

I urge you to reject SB 254. Let's continue fostering a future where education remains a pathway to success for all.

Dr. Marta Silva

Olathe, KS