

Amanda Vega-Mavec, Ed.D.

Private citizen

2/24/2025

SB 254

Written only

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee, I am writing to share comments on SB 254. My name is Amanda Vega-Mavec, Ed.D. and I am a voter in Johnson County. I am writing today to encourage the committee to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans and vote no on SB 254.

I urge you to oppose SB 254/HB 2373, which would repeal in-state tuition for ALL undocumented students and devastate the ability of higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations to serve vulnerable populations.

Studies consistently show that migrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born citizens. This fact, once highlighted on the Department of Justice website, was recently removed, yet it remains crucial in countering misleading narratives. The overwhelming majority of immigrants and their children, including DACA recipients, are not engaged in criminal activity. Instead, they are working, paying taxes, supporting their communities, and pursuing education.

Current laws prohibit non-citizens from accessing public benefits like SNAP and Medicaid. This underscores that our immigrant and DACA neighbors are contributing members of society, not burdens.

America is a land of opportunity, especially regarding education. However, immigrant students lack access to federal or state loans, grants, and scholarships. Having made Kansas their home and actively contributing to the economy, these students deserve access to in-state tuition. Denying this access denies them the opportunity to succeed.

Additionally, labeling undocumented immigrants as "flight risks" contradicts the very arguments for their deportation. Most do not wish to leave; they want to stay and build their lives here. This

presumption undermines the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” and weakens our justice system.

The fact of the matter is, if our immigrant communities have the opportunity to achieve more through higher education, Kansas only stands to benefit. Our state thrives when we welcome new faces and provide opportunities for them to be engaged residents. Please prevent the repeal of in-state tuition for undocumented students by opposing SB 254/ HB 2373.