

Esmeralda Tovar-Mora

PRIVATE CITIZEN

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SB 254

WRITTEN ONLY

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 254 with you today. My name is Esmeralda Tovar-Mora and I am writing today to encourage the committee to protect educational opportunities for all Kansans and vote no on SB 254 with written testimony.

I am here today because I know firsthand the impact that barriers to education can have on undocumented students. I grew up undocumented in Kansas, and despite working hard in school, my future always felt uncertain. The doors that were wide open for my classmates often felt locked for me. College, career aspirations, and even a sense of belonging all seemed just out of reach.

I was fortunate to attend Trinity Catholic Jr./Sr. High School, where I graduated with honors and was deeply involved in my school and community. But it wasn't until I received a form of status through the DACA program that I was truly able to pursue my goals. DACA gave me the ability to further my education and contribute meaningfully to my community. Without it, I don't know where I would be today. This is an additional challenge both financially and emotionally to undocumented students.

SB 254 would create even more barriers for students who want nothing more than a chance to learn, grow, and give back to the only home they've ever known. Education is one of the greatest tools we have for strengthening our state. When we deny young people access to opportunities, we don't just harm them; we hurt Kansas as a whole. The effects of this bill would ripple far beyond the classroom, limiting career prospects, economic contributions, and the hope that every student deserves to have for their future.

I urge you to vote against SB 254. Instead of creating additional obstacles, we should be working toward policies that allow all students, regardless of their immigration status, to reach their full potential and contribute to the success of our communities.

Thank you all for hearing my thoughts on this bill. I encourage you all to vote no to SB 254 and protect educational opportunities for all Kansans. Thank you for your time and consideration.