

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2139
Sister Therese Bangert
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
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I count my advancing age and my longevity in this Capitol and with the legislative process a “home court advantage”. I was here and participated in the development that brought the policy of instate tuition to Kansas. Kansas was a front-runner on this issue and people would ask, “How did you accomplish this?”

I would delight in telling them that young people who would benefit from higher education came to the Capitol and told legislators their stories. They sat in offices and legislators listened to them. Legislators were moved by these students commitment to education, to their communities and to this state. After nearly three years of work on this issue, legislation was passed.

This policy has seen almost yearly attempts to repeal. I have watched that process, too. And I continue to ask myself “What would motivate some to want to throw up more barriers to these hard-working students pursuit of higher education?”

- Is it that they don’t understand that these students must meet the same qualifications as anyone admitted to a Regents institution?
- Is it that they don’t know that this policy does not make them eligible for any federal or state grants or aid?
- Is there honestly a fear that the 651 students out of 184,000 in the Regent institutions for school year 2014-15 will overrun the system?
- Why are we revisiting arguments settled when the instate law was litigated in the Courts in 2005? A lawsuit challenging the Kansas In-State tuition law was dismissed by a federal court. The 10th Circuit then affirmed the lower court’s ruling finding that citizen students were not harmed in any way by this policy.

In the past 10 years, I have often been present in the House Gallery for the discussion of the repeal of instate. Much of the discussion is insightful and compassionate. Legislators from different parties and often opposing political perspectives have demonstrated tremendous courage and foresight in defending this policy that has benefited these young people and our state for more than a decade. However, some of the comments made about these young people bruise my spirit.

So as I honestly work to understand the hearts and minds of legislators who want to repeal this policy, I share where my heart and mind is as I speak for my community, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. I stand on the shoulders of women who 156 years ago came to Kansas with one priority being education of immigrants.

I approach this issue as a Catholic grateful to belong to a Church whose leadership is at the tables in Congress, the State Department and the White House to address and support policies that will stop the suffering of parents and children in this country's broken immigration system.

In the name of my community, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, I ask you to vote NO on HB 2139 and reject the effort to repeal a good education policy. The wise words of one of your peers at the House well several years ago sums it up for me: **“These are the children that the ways of the world brought to us and they are now ours.”**

Thank you and you have my prayers as you continue your work to develop education policy that is good for all the children in Kansas.

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