

February 24, 2015

House Education Committee  
Opposition to HB 2139

Dear Chair Highland and Members of the Committee:

My name is Juan Diaz. For the past ten years, I have lived, and studied and paid taxes as an undocumented immigrant in Kansas. I am grateful for everything that the state of Kansas has given me and, as an immigrant and a Kansan, I am determined to give back. Ever since I came to Kansas as a small child, I have worked hard and studied through elementary, high school, and now college. This committee hearing and this legislation now gives me an opportunity to tell the State of Kansas and you, the members of the Committee, how thankful I am for the instate tuition law. Without this law, it will be extremely hard for me to continue my education. During high school, I was part of my high school varsity soccer team all four years and I was an honor roll student while I was in high school. Education has opened doors that I would not be able to open or walk through otherwise. It was always my goal to get a college education and graduated with my college degree that would make my family proud of what I will accomplish. As an immigrant, the instate tuition law shows me, and other immigrant students like me, that our state legislators believe that our dreams also matter.

My journey in the U.S began 10 years ago when I moved to Kansas as a 10-year-old boy from Mexico. It was a very difficult move for me due to the fact that I spoke no English, but I realized that I had a big opportunity to make my dreams come true. I graduated from Salina South High School in 2013. I knew all along that my family would never be able to afford my education without access to student loans or any other type of financial help, so I worked hard to earn athletic and academic scholarships. After I graduated from high school, I began classes at Kansas Wesleyan University. I struggle to think of what my life would be if I were forced to pay a higher tuition rate. My college experience so far has changed my life. I was part of the University's soccer team; this made my first semester of college more amazing. I had the opportunity to meet new people from different states and counties, and also some immigrant students that enroll under the instate tuition law. I am studying to receive my business degree and also working on my professional pilot license. I just think that none of this would be possible if I were not able to pay instate tuition.

Recently, I qualified for deferred action with the Department of Homeland Security. This means that I am now legally allowed to work in the US, and I can stay and use my degree here in Kansas after I graduate. Now I am in my second year of college and continue to work hard for my dreams and toward my main goal of graduating college with my diploma. I hope when Kansas legislators think of the instate tuition law they think about Kansas' future and what immigrant students bring and give to the state. I am thankful that elected officials who came before you believed that giving bright and hardworking students a chance to contribute to the state of Kansas was a good idea; I hope that you agree and vote to protect instate tuition for all Kansas students. Please vote **NO** on **HB 2139**.

Sincerely,

Juan Diaz