



Making public schools great for every child

KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS
66612-1686

Mark Desetti, Testimony
House Education Committee
House Bill 2139
February 24, 2015

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to speak in opposition to **HB 2139**.

Kansas NEA opposes this bill because it represents the wrong thing to do to high-achieving young people.

Despite what some may say, current law regarding resident tuition does not reward illegal activity; it does not let the children of undocumented immigrants attend our universities for free or at a reduced rate; and it is not a handout.

Children stay with their parents and that fact is no different for the children of undocumented workers than it is for your children or mine. I've moved several times since becoming a parent and it never occurred to me that my children could or would not move with me. It is no different for these children. Their parents came to the United States for a chance at a better life – the same reason my family left Losine, Italy for Monongahela, Pennsylvania in 1901. Their children came with them and those children did not ask, "Are we going there legally?" They just came with their parents.

Under legislation passed by the Legislature, those children of undocumented workers who have attended one of our Kansas high schools for three years and graduated from a Kansas high school or received a GED in Kansas, are eligible to pay in-state tuition rates provided they sign an affidavit stating that they are pursuing or are planning to seek legal status in the United States.

Their families have been here for at least three years. They have shopped in our stores and paid our sales taxes. They have paid property taxes either directly or indirectly through their rent. Other taxes have been withheld from their paychecks. And some of these children are even United States citizens having been born in this country.

These children did not come here consciously violating our immigration laws. They came with their parents. They attended our schools. They struggled and succeeded in learning English. They worked hard to get the kind of grades needed to enter our universities. They deserve a chance to get a post-secondary education. These young people are committed to life in this great nation.

The repeal of K.S.A. 76-731a in HB 2139 will deny these young people the chance to pursue their dreams and to live that life well. We urge you to continue to reward these high achieving, hard-working students for a job well done. It's not about how their parents came here; it's about what those kids did once they got here.

We urge you to reject HB 2139 and honor the hard work of children who simply followed their parents.