

February 22, 2015

Chairman Highland
House Federal and State Affairs Committee

Chairman Siegfried and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Alaide Vilchis Ibarra. I am a Kansan, a U.S. citizen, and part of the first generation of students whose life changed thanks to the in-state tuition law. I wear all of those labels proudly as I meet people from all around the country and world in Washington, DC, where I moved to continue my education and now work. It has been 10 years since I was an undocumented student in high school, where I belonged to the National Honor Society, was in the Honor Roll and won a national award in journalism but still had little chance of continuing my education. But, as I go to work at a job that I love, I am continuously grateful that my state and its legislators decided that my dreams and my education mattered. The road has been hard and at times felt impossible. I still remember sitting for hours with a Spanish-English dictionary translating my homework word-by-word and still talk about the moment an advocate called to tell me that the in-state tuition bill had passed as the moment that defined me. Education gave me a voice at a time when I was not supposed to exist. It empowered me to find myself.

My journey in the U.S began over 13 years ago when I moved to Kansas as a 14 year old and began freshman year at Shawnee Mission Northwest. As I was waiting to graduate in 2004, it became apparent that I was in educational limbo with universities accepting me to programs I could never afford without access to student loans or any other type of financial help. I knew of no educational options for me. It seems serendipitous that the in-state tuition law passed right after I graduated from high school. That fall, I began classes at the University of Kansas. At KU, I found a safe place to grow where people judged me by my character and intellect. I lived in the dorms, attended classes, and celebrated our win in the NCAA National Championship like other students. Yet, when signing the required in-state tuition affidavit promising to become a legal resident when eligible, I was reminded that my education was a privilege that others had worked restlessly to afford me. Despite the uncertainty of my future, I continued to work hard to figure out my passion and have a chance at a career I loved.

A few years ago, I became a US Permanent Resident. For the first time, I was proud to see the taxes that I had filed all along were going to fund other's education with my name and social security number attached to it. Now, as a citizen, I am incredibly proud that my home state continues to give young women and men the opportunity to prosper and someday go to a job they love. I am proud that Kansas legislators view education access as a policy worth defending. I struggle to think what my life would be like without the in-state tuition law. The law sparked my love for public policy, it drove me to get my master's degree in public policy and leave a full-time job to take internships following my passion. It taught me to work as hard as I could to follow my dreams and that I can work to remove my own barriers. I hope when Kansas legislators think of the in-state tuition law they think about Kansas' future and the type of neighbors that we want to have. I urge you to vote against HB 2139 and continue making me

and other US citizens proud to know that our home state believes in the education and dreams of young people.

Ms. Alaide Vilchis Ibarra
Washington, DC