

March 20, 2013

Chairman Siegfried and Honorable Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today in opposition to HB2192. My name is Mayra Aguirre, and I am the Executive Director of the Greater Kansas City Hispanic Development Fund. In my capacity at HDF, I oversee the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, begun nearly 30 years ago to invest in the higher education of Latino students in our region. Last year, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund awarded \$360,000 in scholarships to talented high school seniors, many of whom are immigrants or from immigrant families. Indeed, I have had the opportunity to meet many students whose dreams of a college degree are only possible because of Kansas' in-state tuition policy. The HSF serves students from every district in the Kansas City metropolitan area. 44% of our recipients come from first-generation immigrant households and 65% are first-generation college students. Like previous generations of immigrants to our country, these young people who have grown up here aspire to careers that will open doors of opportunity for themselves and their families. The most common majors for our scholarship recipients are health services, business, education and STEM. I have also been blessed to work with donors to the Hispanic Scholarship Fund who are themselves immigrants and children of immigrants, and whose economic successes have translated into prosperity for our entire community.

Recently, the Hispanic Development Fund invested in a study examining immigrants' economic impact on the state of Kansas. This research, conducted by Dr. Peter Eaton of UMKC's Center for Economic Information, concluded that immigrants—including those who lack immigration authorization—make significant economic contributions to the state. Immigration directly accounts for seven to eight percent of the Kansas economy, and every immigrant job creates an additional .828 jobs in the state. In addition to the role of immigrants in the agriculture and other critical industries, jobs requiring highly-skilled, well-educated workers are also heavily dependent on immigrants. Nearly one in four Kansas computer software developer jobs is held by an immigrant and more than one-third of high school or college subject instructors are foreign-born. Important for today's discussion, the analysis found that Kansas immigrants pay more than their per capita share of state and local taxes—\$4,180 per year, compared to \$4,124 paid annually by native Kansans. These taxes help to subsidize education and health benefits enjoyed by native Kansans, including those within the higher education system.

Similar economic analysis conducted elsewhere has reached parallel conclusions. A recent cost-benefit study of Maryland's instate tuition law, modeled after Kansas' policy, found that, even if one assumes that those immigrants now eligible for instate tuition would stay enrolled without this policy, the net economic effects of instate tuition policies are positive. In Maryland, this figure was calculated to be approximately \$66 million in 2011 dollars, for each annual cohort of immigrant students, estimated at 435 per year, or close to Kansas' actual enrollment figures.

But I oppose HB2192 for reasons beyond just the economic calculation. My parents are immigrants. The legalization program supported by President Reagan gave my parents and siblings a path to U.S. citizenship. I was lucky to be born in the United States and was, like many of the students who would be affected by this proposal, the first in my family to attend college and law school. My story and my dreams are not that far from the kids I see on a daily basis from all over Kansas, including my hometown of Emporia. I'm inspired by our students' stories, and I am encouraged by all that they have to offer. I take great pride and joy in seeing them reach for their American dreams, and I see echoes of myself and my parents in their journeys. For these students' sake, but also for ours, I respectfully ask you to oppose HB2192.

Sincerely,

Mayra Aguirre
Executive Director
Greater Kansas City Hispanic Development Fund