

March 20, 2013

House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Opposition to HB 2192

Chairman Siegfried and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Alaide Vilchis Ibarra and I am a part of the first generation of Kansas students whose life changed thanks to the instate-tuition law. For ten years of my life I lived, studied, and paid taxes as an undocumented immigrant in Kansas. I was on the honor roll of my high school, belonged to the National Honor Society and won a national award in journalism. I sat for hours with a Spanish-English dictionary translating my homework word by word because that is what good students did. I worked hard because education gave me a voice. In a country where my community was proud of my accomplishment I still knew that I did not really exist. When I think back to 2004, the year I graduated high school and the Kansas instate tuition law passed, I am instantly humbled. **The law represents the moment that I, as a teenage girl, realized that advocates and legislators believed that my dreams also mattered.**

My journey in the U.S began over 12 years ago when I moved to Kansas as a 14-year-old girl. I graduated from Shawnee Mission Northwest in 2004. It soon became apparent that my family would never be able to afford my education paying out of state tuition. Without access to student loans or any other type of financial help, I was in educational limbo. I knew of no educational options for me. It seems serendipitous that the instate tuition law passed right after I graduated from high school. That fall, I began classes at the University of Kansas. I struggle to think of what my life would look like if the bill had not passed. At KU, I found a place where I belonged and felt safe. I lived in the dorms, attended classes, and celebrated our win in the NCAA National Championship just like other students. One of the greatest opportunities that the instate tuition law gave me was the possibility to grow into the person that I am today. People got to judge me first by the content of my character and my intellect. **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.** I understood that I had to work hard despite the uncertainty of my future. Education gave me the power to know that, one way or another, I would contribute to the state where I grew up.

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.** My life went through logistical changes but the lessons I learned at KU never left me. The instate tuition law ignited my love for public policy. I saw the impact that well-made laws have in individuals but also how complex the policy process can be. I wanted to learn more about its complexities and become an active part in helping my community. I am now studying to receive a master's degree in Public Policy from American University, one of the best programs in the country. I hope when Kansas legislators think of the instate tuition law they think about Kansas' future and the type of neighbors that we want to have. I will never forget the difficult path I have had to walk and the opportunities that the instate tuition law awarded me. **I am thankful that elected officials believe that giving bright and hard-working-young people a chance to contribute is good policy. I live every day making sure that I prove them right. Please vote no on HB 2192.**

Mrs. Alaide Vilchis Ibarra
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