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February 15, 2018

Chairman Kevin Jones
House Committee on Higher Education Budget
Kansas State Capitol Building
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: HB 2643

Dear Chairman Jones and Members of the Committee:

The Catholic Bishops of Kansas are concerned that passage of HB 2643 would fall heavily on the backs of young adults who, in many cases through no fault of their own, are in our state without legal status, but nonetheless know Kansas as home. For some of these young people, it is the only home they have ever known.

We fully recognize the magnitude of the illegal immigration situation in this country, which is why the Catholic Church has for years implored Congress to reform our immigration system across the board. Immigration is a federal responsibility that simply cannot be addressed coherently by fifty different state policies. Congress has failed to uphold its constitutional responsibilities, and has thus left state policymakers to feel as if they must attempt to manage the situation to whatever extent they can.

However, in attempting to compensate for congressional inaction, states should take care not to pursue remedies that fail to bring us closer to a solution to our immigration challenges, or even exacerbate them. We fear that this legislation will have little effect except to make certain young people's lives more difficult.

We ask you to give special consideration to the fact that this bill directly targets the children of illegal immigrants. Is this really the best way to approach immigration reform? In many cases, these young people had no say in the decision to migrate to Kansas. Some have lived here since a very young age, in some instances so long as to not have any memory of the short time they spent anywhere else. Would our state somehow be better served if these individuals are not educated?

MOST REVEREND JOHN B. BRUNGARDT, D.D.
DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH F. NAUMANN, D.D.
Board Chairman
ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

MOST REVEREND CARL A. KEMME, D.D.
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VERY REVEREND FRANCIS E. COADY, S.T.D.
DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR - DIOCESE OF SALINA

Please extend your compassion to these young people. They already live without peace of mind. They were brought here by their parents, and are ever fearful of the moment when they might be taken away from the only place they think of as home. Surely there are better solutions available to us for reform of our dysfunctional immigration system, even while still supporting the admirable goal of educational opportunities for foster children. Because the problem has been left to fester so long, none will be easy or painless. But we can do better than to make young people pay for circumstances beyond their control.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas

Most Reverend John B. Brungardt
Bishop of Dodge City

Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme
Bishop of Wichita

Very Reverend Francis E. Coady
Diocesan Administrator – Diocese of Salina