

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

My name is Vanessa Sanburn and I serve as president of the USD 497 school board in Lawrence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB2192. Lawrence Public Schools' school board opposes repeal of our current instate tuition policy, along with our statewide body, the Kansas Association of School Boards, teachers' groups, the Kansas Board of Regents, and many university faculty and classroom educators around the state. Our support for Kansas' instate tuition policy as it stands now stems from our commitment to providing all children in our community with a quality education that will prepare them for productive futures.

We are proud of the accomplishments of our students and celebrate what our teachers help them to achieve. At the same time, we acknowledge the challenges that many of our students face, including those who are immigrants, a growing population within our district. These students face great obstacles in their quest for academic excellence.

It's our job, as a school district, to educate the children of Lawrence, regardless of where they came from, or when, or how. That's the law. This is also something that our board takes very seriously. In the last 4 years, our district has made a strong commitment to equity, and with that commitment we've seen impressive progress towards closing the racially predictable achievement gaps that exist within our district. These gaps exist in districts across Kansas and across the nation. Our district has made progress to close these gaps, while increasing overall student achievement, in part by encouraging big dreams for all of our students, dreams that echo their own. It is our pursuit of these shared dreams that motivates our support for the law that allows some immigrant students to pay instate tuition at Kansas colleges and universities.

We hope that the Kansas Legislature will not make that job unnecessarily more difficult by sending a message to a sizable number of our students that their effort, and that of their teachers and administrators, is wasted. We must not sentence our brightest and most dedicated students to years of educational limbo as they wait in an immigration status broken beyond their control. We must not tell families that their sacrifices cannot yield a better future for their children. We must not send U.S. citizen siblings and classmates the message that college is something expected only of a few, when we know that our economic future depends on our ability to produce the most highly-qualified workforce known in our history. We must not constrain the educational progress of our future citizens because of our frustrations with the failure of Congress to deal with the immigration system today.

We ask the Kansas Legislature to work with us, not against us, towards our common goals of prosperity and progress and promise, in the lives of these students and for our entire state. Even within our school board, we may not all agree about the best direction for immigration reform. We don't need to. We are united in our belief that we should preserve current state policy and let our instate tuition law continue to work.