

**House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Hearing on HB2192 In-State Tuition Policy
March 20, 2013
Sister Esther Pineda
Sisters of St. Joseph- Concordia**

My name is Sr. Esther Pineda, a Sister of St. Joseph from Concordia. Our Community has been in Kansas since 1883 ministering to the needs of Kansans in the areas of health care and education. Education has been the bedrock of our ministries.

We, Sisters of St. Joseph, are but one Community of Catholic Sisters in Kansas. Sisters serve in every section of Kansas, the west, central, east, southeast and northeast. We are involved with the immigrant communities; we listen to their stories, we listen to their struggles, we listen to their desires to better their lives and those of their children. So it is with concern that I stand before you asking that you vote against HB2192 that could disallow undocumented, immigrant students the desire to attain post-high school education. Most of these students know English well; some are fluent in both English and their native language. The U.S. is the only place they know as home, having lived here, gone through our elementary education and graduated from our high schools.

The Salina and Concordia students, with whom I have visited, tell me that their desire is to earn a college degree and eventually become contributing members of our communities through careers in teaching, health care, high tech business. Our US Congressional legislators have spoken about the need to "import" high tech employees from other countries, import doctors and nurses. But, here we have students who have grown up in the U.S., know the language and culture; who would like to be able, at some time, to contribute in precisely these fields.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are highly involved in and committed to the promotion of Comprehensive Immigration Reform. And while our in-state tuition policy does not resolve the need for comprehensive immigration reform, it does offer some relief for our immigrant students and their parents. Immigration is a federal issue and many of the Catholic Sisters of Kansas have been and will continue to be in contact with our Kansas Congressional Delegation.

One of the misconceptions of this policy that I have encountered is people saying it opens a floodgate for students to come to Kansas to get an education while paying less for tuition. Under the current Kansas law, students must have graduated from a Kansas high school or received a GED. In addition they are required to have lived in the state for three years and pledge to legalize their status as soon as eligible. Three years--- we are not talking about students coming over to enroll in our colleges just to pay in-state tuition. We're talking about students who have lived and established presence and relationships in Kansas.

We, CSJ, have educated the children of Kansas, we have followed Jesus' directive, "let the children come to me". We know of the benefits of education and also the consequences of no educational opportunities. Please decline the policy of HB2192.

Thank you for having this hearing and for hearing me.

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