

Dear Members of the Kansas State Legislature:

As Kansas people of faith from many different denominations and traditions, we feel it is our ethical responsibility to claim a moral voice in speaking out against such unjust and the uncalled for repeal of legislation such as Instate Tuition, HB2192. Instead, we affirm the importance of loving one's neighbor and welcoming the stranger, an ethical code central to all religious traditions.

Kansas' instate tuition policy is compatible with U.S. immigration policy and helps Kansas make the best, out of a broken federal system, especially for our youth who desire post-secondary education. All sides agree that the inaction and failure of the U.S. Congress to take on the issue of immigration leads us to a sense of frustration that the immigration system is broken. Certain areas of immigration have been addressed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). One of the latest policy changes happened August is called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This is a policy that many of the same youth eligible for instate tuition in Kansas will now have work visas and the legal right to stay in the United States. These same youth, if they are well educated, can contribute to Kansas as taxpayers and business owners, in addition to productive community members.

We see this as nothing more than yet another attack on hardworking people; we affirm and live by the spirit of scripture in welcoming the stranger:

"The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." – Leviticus 19:34

We are called to live out faith by welcoming the stranger and loving our neighbor through building communities of inclusivity. These youth study alongside our children and are part of our congregations and our communities.

Since 2004 when instate tuition passed, Kansas has only averaged 277 students a year who fall under our instate tuition policy. Only qualified immigrant students are eligible for instate tuition in Kansas. It is actually a stricter standard than for out-of-state U.S. citizen students who want to qualify for instate tuition at Kansas colleges. It is hard to meet these requirements, particularly for students who speak English as a Second Language and are almost always first-generation college students. Now that the federal government has explicitly extended an opportunity for youth to stay and work in the U.S., these students and their families won't leave the country, or even the state, if Kansas takes away their instate tuition. Youth now have work visas, and our instate tuition policy provides an opening through which they can prepare themselves to fill the skilled positions that could best grow Kansas' economy.

We celebrate the diversity of our state and the contribution of immigrants. We are dedicated to living out our solidarity and commitment to our immigrant brothers and sisters, and affirm that all people are created equally in the image of God regardless of race or nationality.

In Solidarity and Service,

(40 Clergy and Faith leader signors)

Rev. Tom Are, Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Rev. Cynthia Holder-Rich, Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Rev. George A. McCall, Central Presbyterian Church

Rev. Donald F. Sears, Osawatomie First Presbyterian, Osawatomie, KS

Rev. Landon Whitsitt, Stated Clerk/Executive Synod of Mid- America

Mandy Hill, Compassion Ministry Dir., Redemption Church, Olathe, KS

Rev. Tom Bassford, Exec. Dir. Significant Matters

Rev. Cheryl Somers-Ingersol, St. Marks UMC, Overland Park,KS

Rev. Jim Kenney, Associate Chaplain Lakeview

Rev. Dave Winters, Heartland Presbytery

Rev. Ken Grenz, Valley View United Methodist

Rev. Jodi Matthews, Heartland Presbytery

Rev. Jeff Clayton, Southminster Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Rev. Javier Rios, San Marcos UMC

Rev. Jay McKell, Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Dr. Rev. Ron Faust, Protest Chaplin Disciples of Christ

Rev. Chad Herring, Southminster Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Rev. Gary Kendall, Indian Creek Community Church, Olathe,KS

Rev. Kirk Perruca, Covenant Presbyterian Church

Rev. Laura Canelos, Lawrence, KS

Rev. James Gale, Synod of Mid-America PCUSA

Sister Therese Bangert

Rev. Cruz Guerra, United Methodist

Re. Donna Chavez, Southridge/Argentine Presbyterian Churches, KS

Rev. Glenda Watts, Heartland Presbytery

Dr. Rev. Carlos Leite, El Renuevo, Olathe,KS

Rev. Larry Keller, United Methodist

Rev. Daniel Bocanegra, Vie de Espernaza, Olathe,KS

Sister Vicki Perkins, Kansas City, KS

Rev. Sylvia Romero, Grace United Methodist, Olathe, KS

Laurie Anderson, Elder, Southminster Presbyterian

Rachel Lausch, Elder, Second Presbyterian

Larry Tice, Elder, Southminster Presbyterian

Sally Hindman, Elder, Overland Park Presbyterian

Dr. William McEachen, Elder, Village Presbyterian

Ann Tice, Deacon, Southminster Presbyterian

Betty Athey, Elder, Southminster Presbyterian

Marjorie Blank, Elder, Overland Park Presbyterian

Jeanette Grenz, United Methodist Women