

**House Higher Education Budget Committee
Testimony Opposing HB 2643
Sister Therese Bangert
Social Justice Office, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
February 19, 2018**

Chairperson Jones and Committee,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at the Thursday hearing on HB 2643.

I remind you of my words that I was part of the advocacy team that worked to pass instate tuition policy during the sessions of 2002, 2003 and 2004. This legislation has always been a bi-partisan issue – Democrats and Republicans embraced this policy to assist those who graduated from Kansas high schools to continue their educations.

There has never been a legislative session where there was not an effort to repeal this policy. Again, a bi-partisan group of legislators, students impacted, teachers who have taught them, faith groups, etc. have come to speak for these young people – Kansans in every way except paper.

I would bring to your attention that this policy currently impacts 680 students out of an approximate enrollment in the Regents of 220,000 students. In past testimonies the Regents have testified that there is no financial impact to the Regents because of the small number of students. However, this may not be true for some of our small community colleges in rural areas where the enrollment of instate students is a larger percentage – as pointed out in the testimony given to you by Janeth Vazquez. I believe the community colleges in the rural areas of our state are a crucial part of the Kansas educational system.

Know that the Sisters of Charity stand with the Kansas Catholic Bishops in asking you not to repeal this policy.

I would note that as a person who has had decades of interaction with young people aging out of foster care, I have been proud of the Kansas policy that gives them a Regents education. I see no need to pit the needs of these two groups of beautiful young people against each other.

On the day the instate policy passed the House back in 2004, a wise and caring legislator from Western Kansas went to the well and said,

“These are the children that the ways of the world have brought to us. They are now ours.”

Let us continue to give these young people a possible road to continue their education. They are ours.

Thank YOU for hearing me.

Peace be with YOU!