



MainStream Coalition
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Testimony to House Committee on Higher Education Budget
Chair, Rep. Kevin Jones
Hearing: Monday, Feb. 19, 2018, Rm. 281-N, 3:30

Position – OPPOSE HB 2643

Chair Jones, and Members of the Committee,

The MainStream Coalition opposes passage of HB 2643. While we appreciate the legislature’s concern with children in foster care and their educational attainment, using one group of Kansas children as a cover for excluding and harming another is unacceptable. The net effect of HB2643 would be to undermine immigrant students’ ability to complete their educations, while not tangibly advancing the educations of children in foster care. Specifically, repealing Statute 76-731a would immediately derail the college aspirations of hundreds of Kansas students. This runs counter to the best interests of Kansans.

All students who graduate from Kansas high schools deserve an equal opportunity to pursue higher education, regardless of where they were born. If passed, this measure would send the message that Kansas uses education as a tool to translate priorities about who is valued in our state, and the thousands of young men and women who are currently undocumented will get the message they are not as worthwhile as their peers. This bill is not a choice between foster children and immigrant children. We should never make a choice between showing care and respect for one kind of child over another. All children deserve our protection and support.

Further, it is better for the economy and long-term health of our state to encourage all of our young people to stay in the state while they pursue their professional dreams. Many of our rural communities suffer from a lack of service providers, including teachers, doctors, and social workers. Many of these rural communities also include immigrant families, whose sons and daughters—most of whom, experience has shown, will eventually become U.S. citizens—could very well be the key to filling the gaps which are currently undermining the health and well-being of the people who live in these places. These students and their families already make tremendous sacrifices to afford college, without the help of any public financial aid. Rather than place college further out of reach, we should be finding ways to

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About MainStream

Founded in 1993, the MainStream Coalition is an advocacy group for moderate political views regardless of party. Our members do more than vote.

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create incentives for them to go to college and return to enrich their communities.

MainStream supports the families and students in Kansas who are seeking to improve their lives through hard work and education. We encourage you to do the same.

Thank you.

Liz Meitl

Board Member, MainStream Coalition