

THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

The Honorable Sonia Chang-Díaz
Joint Committee on Education, Senate Chair
State House Room 413C
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Alice Peisch
Joint Committee on Education, House Chair
State House Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

October 13, 2011

Dear Madame Chairmen:

We are writing in support of *H2109 An Act regarding higher education opportunities for high school graduates in the commonwealth*, a bill that will equalize public higher education tuition for all Massachusetts high school graduates, regardless of immigration status. Like many bills recently heard by your committee, this bill creates a path to opportunity past grade 12 for these students, and consequently would have a significant impact on reducing dropout rates.

As a constitutional duty, we invest in the education of all young people in the Commonwealth, at what Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation estimates is a cost of \$132,000 per pupil. We expect to reap the advantage of having an educated workforce, yet the unavailability of affordable public higher education for so many Massachusetts high school graduates undercuts that investment, and frustrates our ability to have the best prepared local workforce.

Part of the impetus to leave school is the lack of a viable future. Students typically learn as teenagers – whether applying for a learner’s permit, a job, or for college – that they have no social security number, and no lawful status. Many lose their motivation, along with their hope. A growing body of research demonstrates that the states which allow undocumented students to pay resident tuition rates to attend college reduce their dropout rates among non-citizens dramatically.

A 2010 study from the University of North Carolina concluded that in-state resident tuition policies targeted at undocumented immigrants help reduce social barriers and economic hurdles that otherwise discourage immigrant youth from continuing their education, whether that means

completing high school, or continuing on to higher education. The same study concluded that many immigrant parents in states without in-state tuition policies, who see little benefit from an expensive higher education, are more likely to encourage their children to leave high school and enter the workforce.

In contrast, states with in-state tuition policies saw, on average, an 11% decrease in their high school drop-out rate among observed immigrant populations within the first several years of such policies being implemented.

A review this year of the relevant literature by the Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island found that in-state tuition is correlated with a 14% decrease in high school dropouts among non-citizen Latinos. The State of Rhode Island, in September 2011, administratively adopted in-state rates for all its high school graduates who have attended high school in Rhode Island for three years. The requirements of the Rhode Island action are essentially the same as those in H.2109, currently in the Joint Committee on Higher Education.

With this data, it becomes clear that in-state tuition policies should be an important component of any successful academic support system for undocumented immigrant youth. The availability of affordable higher education increases motivation and maximizes the investment that we are already making in these youths. The results of these investments are consistently positive— both from an economic and a social standpoint.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this legislation further.

Respectfully submitted,



Denise Provost
27th Middlesex District



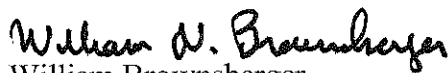
Patricia D. Jehlen
Second Middlesex District



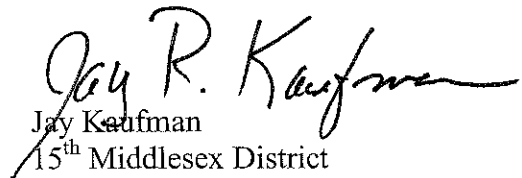
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34th Middlesex District



Kay Khan
11th Middlesex District



William Brownsberger
24th Middlesex District



Jay Kaufman
15th Middlesex District



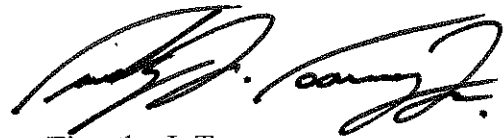
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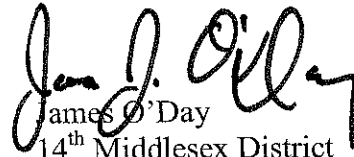
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