

April 26, 2016

The Honorable Jeremiah W. Nixon
Governor
State of Missouri
P.O. Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Nixon:

Our organizations have worked together, through St. Louis Graduates, to advocate for post-secondary education access and success for low-income, first generation, and students of color in the St. Louis region. We are writing to request that you append a letter to your signing of the higher education budget (HB2003) which would clearly articulate that the titling language within that bill directing public institutions to charge the highest possible tuition rate to Missourians approved under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is unenforceable. Much as you did last year in your May 8, 2015 letter regarding HB2, you have the opportunity to send a strong signal that such language “conflicts with state law”, is “void and unenforceable”, and amounts to “legal surplusage.”

During the St. Louis Regional Chamber’s Lobby Day in January you were clear and impassioned in your opposition to this language, noting that legislating through the titling portion of the budget bill is just plain wrong. You further indicated that prohibiting such students from reasonable rates of tuition and access to higher education was mean-spirited and undermined the economic and workforce development goals of our state. We were grateful for your candor and conviction.

Since that time, we have seen a bi-partisan effort in the Senate to remove the offending language from HB3. We have seen a lawsuit filed on behalf of students adversely affected. We have seen leadership from four public institutions take a public position that their students and their schools and our state are suffering the results of this intimidating language. Most recently, we saw a report issued by the Fiscal Policy Institute estimating lost earning potential and foregone tax revenue that will result from effectively barring these students from post-secondary education.

The private sector, both corporate and nonprofit, is well aware of the humanitarian and economic importance of welcoming immigrants to our communities, and ample support exists to counter the deleterious effects of anti-immigration interests in the Missouri legislature. We hope you will sign a letter that will accompany HB2003 and carry a clear message about the legal surplusage in this bill.

Sincerely,



Joe Reagan
President and CEO
St. Louis Regional Chamber



Faith Sandler
Executive Director
The Scholarship Foundation
of St. Louis and Advocacy
Chair, St. Louis Graduates