



The Latino Community Fund Georgia Supports Expanding Access to In-State Tuition for All Qualified Students Is Fiscally Responsible

The 2019 Census indicates that Georgia invests \$10,205 per student amounting to over \$500 million each school year.¹ Over a K-12 span, this is a huge investment that our state needs to fully capitalize upon to build a better educated and trained populace. Many Georgia resident students want to maximize their scholastic potential but encounter financial barriers imposed on them by the state. Allowed to thrive, these students could fill the on-going trained employee shortage that was highlighted by US Senator David Perdue at the 2020 Georgia Chamber breakfast.²

Part of the solution here is to address the bar that keeps thousands of resident students from qualifying for in-state tuition.³ This barrier has been placed based on the assumption that these students and their families do not contribute to the tax base; however, the reality is that they DO pay local, state, and federal taxes via payroll, sales, and property taxes like any other Georgia resident.⁴ Stipulations, such as the time spent living in the state before graduation, already exist for others and could be fitted to guarantee all students wanting to improve their lives and contribute to Georgia's economy can do just that.

The Latino Community Fund Georgia sees a need for a reasonable expansion to in-state tuition; it only makes sense for a state wanting to better compete with both a nationwide pool of talent and innovative magnets like California. Furthermore, as per the Supreme Court case of Plyler v. Doe, the state is already required to invest in the education of all youth within state lines.⁵ Nothing extraordinary is being asked--only an allowance for all qualified students to pursue higher education without having to deal with insurmountable, bank-breaking tuition and fees. To be sure, this stance does not call for an expansion to financial aid.

Such reforms are not novel as they are being implemented across the country. Georgia is ripe for improved legislation on the matter. As it stands, Georgia institutions struggle to meet enrollment needs.⁶ They already offer in-state tuition to some out-of-staters knowing full well of the benefits of having a better educated, skilled, and trained labor pool; they generate more taxable dollars that benefit all Georgians while decreasing the need for government assistance.⁷

All Georgians are better served when we avoid wading into costly federal immigration policies. The federal administration is already addressing the issue. Meanwhile, we have thousands of kids that are receiving a K-12 education but will be prevented from in-state tuition. Why not support this youth as they struggle to become educated and productive adults of our great state?

1 Deb Belt, "How Georgia Education Ranks Nationwide: Census Bureau," *Patch Media*, May 27, 2019, www.patch.com/georgia/atlanta/how-georgia-education-spending-ranks-nationwide-census-bureau/.

2 Georgia Chamber, "2020 Eggs and Issues Senator Perdue Welcome and Remarks," January 21, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhInZmoBljk

3 Matt Vasilogambros, "The Folly of Under-Educating the Undocumented," *The Atlantic*, March 16, 2016, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/the-folly-of-under-educating-the-undocumented/4773877/.

4 Elaine Kamarck and Christine Stenglein, "How many undocumented immigrants are in the United States and who are they?" *Brookings*, November 12, 2019, www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/how-many-undocumented

5 Plyler v. Doe 457 U.S. 202 (1982).

6 Eric Stirgus, "University of West GA may cede faculty to fill \$3 million revenue gap," *AJC*, November 8, 2019.

7 "Undocumented Student Tuition: Overview," National Conference of State Legislatures, September 19, 2019, www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-overview.aspx.