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By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

Some states are making it harder for illegal immigrants to attend college by denying in-state tuition benefits or banning undocumented students.

In the past two years, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia and Oklahoma have refused in-state tuition benefits to students who entered the USA illegally with their parents but grew up and went to school in the state. That represents a reversal from earlier this decade, when 10 states passed laws allowing in-state rates for such students.

This summer, South Carolina became the first state to bar undocumented students from all public colleges and universities.

North Carolina's community colleges in May ordered its 58 campuses to stop enrolling undocumented students after the state attorney general said admitting them may violate federal law.

"The new trend is to kick illegal aliens out of college altogether," says William Gheen of Americans for Legal Immigration Political Action Committee, which opposes taxpayer subsidies for undocumented immigrants.

Josh Bernstein of the National Immigration Law Center, an illegal-immigrants advocate, says sweeping anti-immigration bills are "a very serious threat" to the overall illegal population.

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Georgia, which barred undocumented students from in-state tuition rates in 2006, enacted laws in May preventing them from receiving state scholarships and certain student loans.

This fall, the University of Arkansas will require students to submit Social Security numbers and proof of residency. In May, Arkansas Department of Higher Education Director Jim Purcell warned that students without documentation "will not be considered as legally enrolled students" when determining an institution's state funding.

Opponents say students shouldn't be penalized for their parents' actions. Helping them is "the right thing to do even if it's unpopular," says North Carolina state Rep. Pricey Harrison, a Democrat who introduced a bill that would prevent state institutions from asking about students' immigration status.

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