

February 27, 2025

SB 254, Prohibiting aliens who are unlawfully present in the United States from receiving any state or local public benefit

Opponent, written only

Laurel Burchfield
Resident and city councilmember of Shawnee, KS

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee,

I oppose SB 254. This bill is an overreach into local government control and attempts to make local government officials agents of the federal government's current broad and dangerous approach to immigration.

SB 254 would create an unreasonable burden on local governments who provide direct benefits or partner with nonprofits to support their residents with health, welfare, housing, food assistance, or other public benefits. I am concerned that this bill would have a chilling effect on a local government's ability to subgrant funds to nonprofits that provide these resources, preventing cities from sending critical dollars to trusted partners who serve all members of our community. The unintended consequences of SB 254 would also hurt nonprofits and residents who do reside with legal status in our communities.

Further, new section 1, subsection d (pg 2, lines 4-7) mandates that "state and local agencies administering public benefits in this state shall cooperate with the United States department of homeland security in achieving verification of aliens' lawful presence in the United States." This is a federal overreach into the operations of state and local agencies that could extend beyond cooperation for verification and trigger the arrest of residents. Putting local agencies in this position jeopardizes and breaks their hard-earned relationships with some of our most vulnerable residents, *including documented immigrants who reside here legally with their families*. The harm this will cause to an agency's mission of supporting vulnerable residents could keep families and children from accessing resources necessary for survival.

I have further concerns about the harm this bill would have on our youth seeking to further their education. This also would make changes to our justice system by undermining the foundational principle of "innocent until proven guilty" through the "rebuttable presumption" of flight risk for undocumented immigrants.

I do believe that our immigration system needs to be reformed in a way that protects and serves all of our citizens. But the agenda of the current federal administration, which is being echoed in many of the state proposals introduced by the AG in this committee, is overly broad with many unintended consequences. Bills such as SB 254 dehumanize Kansas residents, including those

who have lived safely in our communities and contributed to our state's economic well-being for years.

We are better than this.

Laurel Burchfield

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