

## **Testimony in Opposition to SB 254 - Written Only**

Kansas Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

February 18, 2025

### **Chairman and Members of the Committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Matthew Kleinmann, and I am a resident of Wyandotte County. I am here to express my strong opposition to SB 254, a bill that is not only legally questionable but also morally and economically reckless.

The Bible tells us in Leviticus 19:33-34 that "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God." Turning our backs on those seeking safety and a better life contradicts the moral and ethical teachings that have guided America for generations.

At its core, SB 254 is government overreach that undermines the values of our state—fairness, economic strength, and community safety. While this bill claims to align with federal law, it goes far beyond existing requirements and creates unnecessary burdens on Kansas families, businesses, and local governments.

This bill denies essential public benefits—including healthcare, housing, and educational opportunities—to individuals who cannot immediately verify their immigration status. But let's be clear: immigrants in Kansas contribute to our communities in meaningful ways—as business owners, workers, and taxpayers. This bill threatens to push thousands of mixed-status families into crisis, harming Kansas children and creating costly unintended consequences.

A comprehensive analysis from the [Cato Institute's 2023 study \*The Fiscal Impact of Immigration in the United States\*](#) demonstrates that immigrants contribute significantly more in taxes than they consume in government benefits. This net positive fiscal effect is particularly pronounced in Kansas, where immigrants bolster key industries, address labor shortages, and enhance economic vitality.

- Kansas's economy relies heavily on immigrants to fill critical labor gaps, with 8.7% of the workforce being foreign-born.
- 16% of Kansas's farm labor comes from immigrants, sustaining an industry generating \$14.4 billion annually.
- Immigrants represent 9% of Kansas's self-employed business owners, generating \$323 million in annual revenue.
- The Perryman Group estimates that foreign-born workers support \$16.2 billion in annual gross product and 137,500 jobs statewide. When multiplier effects are considered, this impact expands to \$46.4 billion in output and 419,500 jobs.
- Immigrant households in Kansas contribute substantially to public coffers, paying \$966.9 million in federal taxes and \$588 million in state/local taxes.

- Even undocumented immigrants contribute \$72.4 million federally and \$66.2 million locally.
- Kansas's foreign-born population supports \$9.9 billion in rural economic output while their per capita state/local tax payments exceed those of non-immigrants.

Additionally, SB 254's requirement that every adult applying for public benefits must prove lawful presence will create an undue administrative burden on state agencies, local governments, and businesses. Many U.S. citizens—particularly seniors, rural residents, and low-income individuals—lack immediate access to the required documentation. This means delays, wrongful denials, and increased government inefficiency for American citizens.

SB 254 also attacks due process, forcing noncitizens to undergo mandatory immigration status checks before they can be considered for pretrial release. The bill creates a presumption that noncitizens are flight risks—which is a dangerous departure from the principles of equal justice under the law.

This provision ignores judicial discretion and could lead to indefinite detention for individuals who pose no risk to the community. This will lead to overcrowded jails, increased costs for local law enforcement, and a justice system that treats people differently based on immigration status rather than actual risk.

Kansas is strongest when we focus on common-sense policies that help our economy, keep our communities safe, and ensure equal opportunity. Instead of passing punitive measures like SB 254, we should be:

- Investing in workforce development programs that help all Kansans—citizens and immigrants alike—gain the skills they need to contribute to our economy.
- Supporting local businesses by reducing bureaucratic red tape, not adding to it with unnecessary verification mandates.
- Strengthening community policing initiatives that build trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities—because when people are afraid to report crimes, everyone is less safe.

SB 254 does not reflect the values of Kansas. It does not make our communities safer. It does not strengthen our economy. Instead, it creates fear, drives away workers, punishes Kansas families, and places unnecessary burdens on local governments and small businesses. I urge this committee to reject SB 254 and instead pursue policies that make Kansas a welcoming, economically strong, and just state for all its residents.

In the Bible, Matthew 25:35 reminds us "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Our immigrant community is giving us sustenance, through their labor, their taxes, and their contributions to our great state. We should heed the words of Jesus and welcome our Neighbors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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