

Christian Ramirez

Representing: Self

Testimony Opposing SB 254

Written-only Testimony

Chairman Thompson and members of the committee,

My name is Christian Ramirez, and I write to you today, not in my official capacity as a local elected official, but as a proud Mexican American, to voice my strong opposition to Senate Bill No. 254. While this bill is presented as a measure to enforce immigration law and safeguard public resources, in reality, it creates harmful consequences for Kansas communities, businesses, and local governments. Moreover, the bill is redundant and unnecessary, as current federal law already requires proof of lawful presence—including a Social Security number—for most public benefits, meaning undocumented immigrants are already ineligible.

I. The Bill is Redundant and Unnecessary

Senate Bill No. 254 seeks to prohibit undocumented immigrants from accessing state and local public benefits, yet federal law already does this. Under existing federal requirements, individuals must provide a valid Social Security number to access most public benefits, including welfare, food assistance, and healthcare programs. Since undocumented immigrants do not have Social Security numbers, they are already excluded from these programs. This bill, therefore, does nothing new - it merely duplicates existing policies while creating unnecessary administrative burdens and confusion.

Additionally, public benefit programs already have strict verification processes in place to ensure only eligible individuals receive assistance. State and local agencies follow federal guidelines to verify identity and lawful presence, making SB 254 an unnecessary bureaucratic measure. Instead of improving efficiency or saving taxpayer money, this bill will force state and local governments to spend additional resources verifying information that is already being checked under federal law.

II. Unfunded Mandates on Local Governments

Senate Bill No. 254 imposes yet another unfunded mandate on local government agencies, a pattern that Kansas has become notorious for in recent years. This bill requires local and state agencies to verify the lawful presence of any applicant over the age of 18 seeking public benefits, but it does not provide any funding or resources to carry out these additional administrative duties. This increased workload will place significant financial and logistical burdens on local governments already operating under limited budgets.

Local agencies will be forced to invest in staff training, additional personnel, and technological upgrades to comply with the bill's verification mandates. For smaller municipalities and rural areas, where resources are already stretched thin, these new responsibilities will divert funding from essential services like public safety, education, and community health programs. The

absence of state support means these costs will fall squarely on local taxpayers, increasing financial strain without improving public services.

This bill will also result in delays and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Public agencies will need to navigate complex federal immigration databases—such as the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program—to verify applicants' immigration status. These systems are often slow and prone to errors, leading to delayed assistance for eligible individuals and increased administrative costs. Local governments should not be burdened with additional mandates unless the state is willing to provide the resources to implement them effectively.

III. Legal and Constitutional Concerns

This bill also raises serious legal and constitutional concerns. One of the most troubling provisions is the creation of a "rebuttable presumption" that undocumented individuals charged with a crime are flight risks. Bail determinations should be based on an individual's specific circumstances, not blanket assumptions about immigration status. Presuming that all undocumented individuals are flight risks undermines due process, removes judicial discretion, and could lead to the unnecessary detention of individuals who pose no threat to public safety.

Additionally, this bill creates the potential for discriminatory enforcement. Since law enforcement and local agencies may not have the expertise to correctly interpret immigration status, the risk of racial profiling increases. People who “appear” to be foreign-born—regardless of their actual status—could be subjected to additional scrutiny and wrongful denial of services. This will further erode trust in government institutions and create fear in immigrant communities, making them less likely to report crimes or seek help when they need it.

IV. Weakening Community Trust and Public Safety

One of the most damaging effects of SB 254 is the way it undermines trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. When people fear that any interaction with a government agency could lead to immigration consequences, they become less likely to report crimes, serve as witnesses, or cooperate with authorities. This harms public safety for everyone, not just immigrant communities. Law enforcement agencies rely on community trust to do their jobs effectively, and policies that push people further into the shadows make it harder for officers to keep our communities safe.

Additionally, the bill's prohibition on in-state tuition for undocumented students will have long-term economic consequences. Denying students the opportunity to pursue higher education will not stop them from living in Kansas, but it will make it harder for them to contribute to the economy in meaningful ways. Instead of fostering a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of the modern economy, SB 254 limits opportunities and discourages young people from investing in their futures.

V. Conclusion

Senate Bill No. 254 is not only harmful but entirely unnecessary. Federal law already prevents undocumented immigrants from accessing public benefits, making this bill a redundant measure that will only create confusion, administrative burdens, and additional costs for Kansas

taxpayers. Furthermore, this legislation imposes yet another unfunded mandate on local governments, forcing them to absorb the cost of compliance without state support. This will drain resources from essential community services and place an undue burden on already overworked local agencies.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to reject this harmful and unnecessary legislation. Kansas deserves policies that promote efficiency, fairness, and community safety—not laws that duplicate existing rules while creating new problems.

Thank you,

Christian Ramirez