

February 10, 2012

House Federal and State Affairs Committee

Chairman Brunk and Honorable Members of the Committee,
Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you to today. I am appreciative and grateful for the sacrifice every one of you has made in the selfless service to your district and to our state.

My name is Lalo Muñoz. I work as the director of a faith based organization where I have dedicated my life to serving immigrant families. My testimony today however, is given as a lifelong Kansan and as a believer that as a Christian it is my calling to give a voice to those who scripture calls "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine".

I come from humble beginnings that emphasized studying hard and working harder. That nothing is given to you unless you work for it. And that we have a responsibility to care for each other because when any one of us suffers, we all suffer. It is compassion that is at the heart of what it is to be an American and a Kansan.

It is also compassion that is all too often lacking in political discussions like immigration. On both sides of the debate, a lack of compassion has created a slippery slope toward the thoughtless demonization of the other side. Extreme elements on both sides have overtaken the debate crowding out voices of compassion at the center. I cringe when I hear the word racists thrown out just the same as when I cringe when I hear anchor baby used.

Are we really at a point now that children and newborn babies just entering our world are fair game?

Similarly, do we believe that making life miserable for undocumented immigrants is the proper solution to the problem of immigration, given what we know about the economic consequences of immigration bills passed in Alabama and Arizona. Just last month, economist Dr. Samuel Addy at the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama recently concluded a cost-benefit analysis of HB56 Alabama's immigration laws. Dr. Addy writes:

"Nobody can fault the intent of the immigration law, which targets illegal immigration, but the law itself is costly mainly because it reduces demand in the state economy. Instead of boosting state economic growth, the law is certain to be a drag on economic development even without considering costs associated with its implementation and enforcement."

And what are the costs according to Dr. Addy? The resulting decline in aggregate demand would have annual economic and fiscal impacts of reductions of about

- (i) reduction of 70,000-140,000 jobs with \$1.2-5.8 billion in earnings,
- (ii) reduction of \$2.3-10.8 billion in Alabama GDP or 1.3-6.2 percent of the state's \$172.6 billion GDP in 2010,
- (iii) reduction of \$56.7-264.5 million in state income and sales tax collections, and
- (iv) reduction of \$20.0-93.1 million in local sales tax collections

House Fed & State Affairs

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Attachment 12

Again, as I practice compassion to try to understand this bill I understand that individuals want to feel like the border is under control. I understand individuals are upset at the state of the economy and I feel the frustration with not being able to get ahead in life. But Alabama's approach to the problem of immigration is the wrong one.

Kansas needs to chart a different approach. An approach that will actually improve the economy and our workforce for local businesses to flourish. An approach that will maintain strong worker rights and prioritize US Citizens but in areas where we still have a shortage of workers create a path for undocumented immigrants to more fully contribute to our society. An approach, in short, that is compassionate to all in Kansas. This is why I support HB 2712 and I urge you to support it as well.

Thank you.

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