



SU CONEXIÓN A LA COMUNIDAD

March 14, 2022

Chairman Barker and members of the Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Re: opposition of HB 2717

Chairman Baker and Committee, on behalf of El Centro's board and staff, and those we serve, we thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition of HB2717.

As a 45-year-old Latino serving organization, our mission is to strengthen communities and improve the lives of Latinos and others through educational, social, and economic opportunities. For the past five years, we have worked with our communities to successfully adopt a safe and welcoming ordinance in Roeland Park and Wyandotte County. This kind of ordinance not only affirms the values of our state, but its diversity, which has not always been inclusive, safe, or welcoming for us. There is work to be done and these two communities began by passing these ordinances for those who call Wyandotte and Roeland Park home, so they may feel valued, wanted, and respected.

My family and those El Centro serves have played a critical role in these cities economic success, revitalization of neighborhoods, growth of the tax base and, as you are aware, our entrepreneurial spirit is everywhere. Our families shared their stories of struggle and living in constant fear of deportation. Our mixed status families have lived in this county on average of 15-20 years. Thus, this ordinance is a step to build trust and cooperation between, with and in our local government and local law enforcement.

I want to emphasize there is nothing in these ordinances that limits public safety officers from responding to criminal activity or prevents federal and state and local officials from communicating with each other about criminal activity. Ordinances such as this are in no way a free pass for any person who violates the law. Everyone, including those without status, will remain accountable to our legal system.

These ordinances are meant to ensure that all city departments build trust so all its members feel they can contact the police when they are a victim of a crime, a witness of a crime, codes about unsafe homes, or reserve a facility at one of our parks. When all individuals can report and seek protection without the fear of being deported and separated from their families, police can best protect everyone in the communities. Time and resources spent engaging in federal immigration enforcement detracts from our local police department's core functions: to serve and protect.

The Safe and Welcoming City Ordinance begins an opportunity to move our community to a place all can share a sense of belonging and away from past injustice. A safe and welcoming

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community is one where individuals feel safe, respected, and comfortable in being themselves and expressing all aspects of their identity. It is a place where each person shares a sense of belonging with its other members. It is home.

Moving our ordinance into practice and policy, locally, allows more of our community to contribute to the safety and well-being of us all. Systems and policies do not work without people implementing and living them out. We can start with honoring our local community's sovereignty, implement our Safe and Welcoming Ordinances and oppose HB 2717.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irene Caudillo". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Irene Caudillo
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