

Bill: HB 2717  
To: Rep. John Barker, Chair  
House Federal and State Affairs Committee  
Re: Oppose  
Type:Written only  
DT: 3/15/22

FR: Connie Brown Collins  
Voter Rights Network of Wyandotte County  
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Representative Barker and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee:

If workers provide the skeleton, the very framework of this country, then immigrant workers are the backbone and critical appendages. My name is Connie Brown Collins and I am writing as an engaged citizen of Wyandotte County Kansas City, KS.

The state of Kansas relies heavily on immigrants. Kansas has used immigrants in the farm fields since the late 1800's. Following settlements by explorers and Native American Indians, (who by the way, were immigrants), Wyandotte county was built by immigrants. If we are to protect the integrity of our county, we must protect our immigrants. HB 2717 works against that principle.

I oppose HB 2717 on the following grounds:

- Municipalities know what is best for their cities and counties, including the Wyandotte County Mayor Garner and Unified Government Commissioners. Topeka elected representatives should follow their lead.

- Workers need to feel safe in this environment of worker shortages. SB 2717 will send needed workers to other states where they don't feel threatened. Many immigrant families have combination status, one member might be an immigrant, but the others could be citizens. The consequences of this bill could tear hard-working families apart or force them to seek a less intimidating residential setting.
- Contrary to some opinions, this bill does not ban cooperation with federal immigration authorities if public safety is at risk. It sets parameters as to the level that local authorities can cooperate with federal agencies, such as ICE, but it does not bar that cooperation.
- Citizen trust in law enforcement is key to public safety. If immigrants (whether legal or not) think they will be arrested and deported, or their information will be shared with ICE, they will be too frightened and intimidated to report crimes. This can create a potential crime increase and promote further distrust and lack of cooperation with local law enforcement and the court systems. The dilemma can lead to increased risk from crime for all residents. In Wyandotte County, District Attorney Mark Dupree endorsed the Safe and Welcoming ordinance, and neither Police Chief Carl Oakman nor Sheriff Daniel Soptic opposed the ordinance.
- The Municipal ID portion of the Safe and Welcoming Ordinance has built-in protections from fraud with accompanying penalties. The ID will be labeled Municipal, and not include or allude to a State ID designation.
- Unfortunately, because the federal government has not passed immigration reform, states and local governments are tasked

with developing their own means of building economies which include and protect immigrants, who now live without legal redress to their status. More pressure should be exerted on Congress to enact immigration reform legislation, rather than by inaction, promoting state overreach into cities who seek to provide adequate safeguards for their diverse communities.

Please oppose HB 2717. It has major flaws and does not represent the needs of Wyandotte County's majority minority.

Thank you for your time, consideration and attention to this most critical issue.

Sincerely,

Connie Brown Collins  
Voter Rights Network of Wyandotte County