

TESTIMONY OPPOSING HB 2717

MARCH 15, 2022

KAY HELEY RN

Chairman Barker and members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony opposing HB 2717. I am a former public school nurse and the mother-in-law of a DACA recipient whose family brought her to the US when she was 3 years old. I write on behalf of the innocent children who are negatively impacted by this bill.

Local Control is important: The Safe and Welcoming Act was passed on 2/10/22 by the Wyandotte County Board of Commissioners in its legitimate role of developing policy that is in the best interest of its local community.

Public safety is not compromised: The Act specifically allows cooperation with ICE when there is a judicial warrant or the public safety is at risk. ID Fraud is addressed in the Act. The Act encourages reporting crime to authorities. HB 2717 will discourage crime reporting.

Parents cannot participate in school activities or as a volunteer: School Safety policies require an ID for adults to enter the building. Parents without ID's cannot participate as a classroom volunteer, room parent or even come for lunch with their child. Parents without documentation are also afraid to come to school for fear of being turned over to ICE. Educators want parent involvement which is difficult and frightening for parents without documentation. Children want their parents to be part of their school. A municipal ID will make it easier.

Children live in fear: Children are afraid of and are traumatized by their parents being detained and deported. I am aware of several situations where parents were detained during the school day. In one situation, both parents were detained, their elementary school son was picked up by police from school, in front of his peers, and taken to foster care. Only the mother was finally released pending a hearing. The child was fearful to leave his mother to go anywhere. And the child felt too shamed to return to that school. In another situation, the mother of a kindergartner was stopped by police for a minor infraction on her way to take her child to school. There was communication with ICE and the mother was taken into custody while a police officer took the kindergartner to school. In another situation, ICE officers took a mother away in handcuffs from her 3 daughters while they were walking on a neighborhood street. These parents only want the best for their children. Imagine if this were your family?

Parents must make and communicate secret plans for their children's care in the event they are detained: I have had frightened elementary and middle school students reluctantly share with me what they have memorized in case their parent is detained- a phone number to call, where they go if no one is home when they get home from school, who is "safe" to talk to. National immigration policy is lacking. Local policy like the SWC Act can help families.

Please vote NO on HB 2717 and allow local jurisdictions to do what they deem best for their frightened children and undocumented, caring parents who are also taxpayers.

Sincerely,

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