

Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Arnberger, Ranking Member Ruiz, and members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

I am here because I oppose HB 2717.

As a Hungarian-American Jew, I find this bill chilling.

My grandmother came to this country, seven months pregnant with my mother, three years before the United States restricted immigration from the countries Jews were fleeing. And exactly two of the Jews in the Hungarian village where she'd grown up survived the nazi camps. My grandmother was like a third parent to me. Her brother, my great-uncle Abí , was one the two Jews who survived. He described coming home to find both his immediate family and his Jewish community had been slaughtered, and his long-time neighbors had moved themselves into his house and were eating at his table, still challenging his right to be there. As a child, this story left me more confused than angry. How exactly did his neighbors stop hoping my family survived and, instead, decide to take everything they had and be so sure it was rightfully theirs that, once they heard Jews were liberated from the camps, they still felt entitled everything my great-uncle had worked for?

I think it must have happened little by little—slowly believing people like me are less human than people like them—until they believed my family deserved nothing, and they—the “real” citizens of Hungary, deserved everything.

I'd like to believe Kansans are better than this—that we don't say “those people,” who are our neighbors, deserve less, but that is the barely hidden subtext of HB 2717. Why else would people who normally complain about government overreach now say state government needs to play Big Brother, step in, and override the elected officials of municipalities who have crafted regulations based on what actually works in our communities? Or pretend that Wyandotte County's already clearly labelled municipal ID is at any risk of being mistaken for a state ID? We all know that the federal government has failed to pass meaningful immigration reform and that failure has left far too many immigrants vulnerable to exploitation and violence. This proposed legislation is a cynical attempt to worsen those conditions and pit neighbor against neighbor, letting the state decide who deserves less and who should be left vulnerable. I hope you will choose decency and kill HB 2717.

Thank you.

M Horowitz