

March 12, 2022

Dear Chairman Barker, Ranking Member Ruiz, and Committee Members

Thank you for allowing testimony regarding **HB 2717**.

I strongly oppose this bill. In my written testimony that follows I will explain my opposition

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Since our federal government, for decades, has failed to develop and pass humane and reasonable immigration reforms, communities, cities, and workers are left in limbo. Wyandotte County has taken well-researched and responsible action to help its residents, government institutions, and businesses function with safety and efficiency.

The *Safe and Welcoming* ordinance was recently passed by elected officials after several years of consideration. Wyandotte County is said to be one of the most diverse in the USA. The beauty of this diversity is illustrated by the many entrepreneurial, unique businesses that line its streets. The *Safe and Welcoming* Ordinance has the potential to stimulate many more new businesses which, in turn, will continue the economic renewal of the area.

**HB 2717, if passed, would damage the Wyandotte community's potential for renewal and growth.**

Economic growth occurs only in an environment of safety. Now, many documented and undocumented immigrants are afraid to report crimes to the police because they are afraid of being turned over to ICE. Thus, if a crime is observed or experienced, the offenders are free to continue their criminal activity, which negatively affects the entire community.

**HB 2717 would create an unfunded state mandate on local police to enforce federal law.**

Immigration law is federal. There is neither funding for nor any requirement for local police or sheriffs to enforce or even cooperate with ICE. The *Safe and Welcoming Act* does not ban cooperation with federal immigration authorities when public safety is at risk, but it does set clear guidelines for what level of cooperation a municipality has with federal authorities such as ICE. In reality, it creates protection for local law enforcement officials by clarifying what they are *not* required to do.

**HB 2717 would exacerbate worker shortages.**

This bill, if passed, will scare away workers and families, especially because many families are of mixed citizenship status. Immigrants throughout the history of our country have proven themselves to be hard workers and have contributed far more to our culture and economy than they have been given. They should be encouraged and supported; we need them.

**HB 2717 is a glaring example of hierarchical government overreach.**

Many Kansas elected officials advocate against government overreach and for smaller government. Passing this bill would be hypocritical because the State Legislature would essentially be telling a city/county government and residents that they do not know what is best for their community.

**HB 2717 would prohibit our local government from protecting their most vulnerable.**

The *Safe and Welcoming Ordinance* will provide a municipal photo ID to the thousands of residents who have no ID. Immigrants are not the only ones who will be helped. For example, many elderly people who no longer drive do not have an updated ID. Other residents who cannot afford or drive a car do not have an ID. In today's society, functioning without a photo ID is nearly impossible and having one will facilitate their ability to participate in normal everyday activities, as well as assist businesses who require ID from customers.

If residents are afraid that applying for an ID will cause government officials to notify ICE of their citizenship status, they will not come forward to apply. **HB 2717** would negate all the community safety benefits provided by the *Safe and Welcoming Ordinance*.

In conclusion, there are so many ways that **HB 2717** if passed, would damage the Wyandotte Community. It would also be very disheartening to the Kansas citizens who have worked so hard and long to develop the legal criteria and elicit broad support for this ordinance that will make the Wyandotte community safer, more inclusive, and economically powerful.

Please do not pass this bill out of this Committee.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Ms. Corliss Jacobs  
20745 College Blvd  
Olathe, KS 66061