

HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

BILL NUMBER: HB 2717

Support _____ Oppose Neutral _____

Testimony Will Be: In Person Oral _____ Webex Oral _____ Written Only

For Meeting on _____ March 15th at 9:00 am _____ (Date)

Testimony By: **Karla Juarez** _____
(Name of person testifying)

On Behalf Of: SELF & Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation
(Association, Corporation, Individual)

Email Address: Karla@airrc.org

Telephone: (913) 229-6183



To: House Federal & State Affairs Committee
Rep. John Barker, Chairman

From: Karla Juarez

Re: HB 2717

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share that I strongly oppose HB 2717 because it will decrease crime reporting and it will mandate local law enforcement to work with ICE. Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation (AIRR) was one of the 30 organizations working

towards the passage of the Safe and Welcoming Wyandotte ordinance. AIRR is committed to lead and support programs that are just for all.

Why should the committee oppose HB 2717? Immigration law is federal law. There is neither funding for nor any requirement that local police or sheriffs enforce or cooperate in the enforcement of immigration law, actions for which they are not trained. The Safe and Welcoming Act does not ban cooperation with federal immigration authorities if the public safety is at risk. What the Safe and Welcoming ordinance does is set boundaries and clear guidelines as to what level of cooperation a municipality should have with federal agencies like ICE, but in no way does it prohibit that cooperation. Everyone must be held accountable to our justice system.

HB 2717 would harm public safety by increasing unreported crime and lack of cooperation with police and courts. When local police and sheriffs do turn residents over to ICE or share information with ICE on people whom they suspect are unauthorized immigrants, it has a very chilling effect on public safety which is local law enforcement's primary responsibility. Immigrants, whether documented or not, fear the police and do not call them to report crimes. Part of our work to pass Safe and Welcoming Wyandotte led us to speaking to thousands of Wyandotte residents and there was an overwhelming support and need for this ordinance. One issue highlighted was the lack of crime reported. One family mentioned their car being broken into and did not call the police because of fear of being asked for an ID or immigration status. The Safe and Welcoming City act tells local law enforcement to not ask for immigration status when encountering a victim of a crime, unless the status is related to the crime being committed. Through qualitative research, we were able to determine that the Safe and Welcoming City act makes the community safer.

House Bill 2717 therefore is a bill which actually harms the public safety by forcing our police to engage in activities that they are not only not trained or funded for but also that would undercut their effectiveness in the activities which are their primary mission – protecting the public, enforcing our state and municipal laws, and making us all feel safe.

As a Kansas resident myself, I appreciate that local governments respond to local needs and the state be left out of decisions like this.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karla Juarez
Executive director, AIRR/ Kansas voter