

Written Testimony Opposing SB172

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I'm writing to oppose SB172.

First, there is no need for this bill. Trespassing is already illegal, as is destruction or stealing of property. The only thing this bill attempts to do is to add additional potential charges for people speaking their conscience. The goal is to squelch the right of free speech.

As someone who has long participated in peaceful protests, driven by my values and inspired by my love for God and neighbor, I find this sort of threat undemocratic and unfair. Further, using the concept of criminal conspiracy against groups organizing to create a better and cleaner America takes it up a notch. If one protester takes an action that sponsoring organizations have not sanctioned, those organizations could be accused of criminal conduct. Protests become construed as "racketeering activity." Such a law sounds like it comes from a dictatorship intent on keeping its people "in line," rather than a democracy trying to do the will of the people.

Like the majority of Kansans, I stand for free speech over special interests and the right of conscience over unnecessary regulation of citizen action. Such a law will not diminish my interest in working for climate care. It will only make me, and many others, more determined in our work.

Please oppose the unnecessary and repressive SB172.