



TESTIMONY OF CALEB SMITH  
INCLUSIVE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR  
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS  
**IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2717**  
MARCH 29, 2022

Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

My name is Caleb Smith; I am a Campaign Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

**Kansas Appleseed opposes HB 2717.** Kansas is a better state when we are welcoming and inclusive. This bill undermines Kansas values— community, prosperity, and self-determination—while weakening our economy and making our communities less safe.

Kansas should welcome immigrants with dignity, compassion with full participation in our communities and equal protection of the law. Immigrants are essential and their contributions make our state strong. Many have come to Kansas seeking safety.

Right now, as the world watches, we condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and our hearts break for the families torn apart. It's devastating times like these that underscore how important it is for everyone to have a safe place to thrive and raise their families.

Our state's future and the wellbeing of our communities is at stake. According to a recent study, counties with welcoming or sanctuary policies are safer and have stronger economies than counties without such policies, even when controlling for a broad range of demographic characteristics. This study found welcoming counties had 35.5 fewer crimes committed per 10,000 people compared to non sanctuary counties, median household incomes that were \$4,353 higher, a poverty rate that is 2.3% lower, and unemployment that is 1.1% lower.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wong, T. "The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy," Center for American Progress (2017).  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-effects-of-sanctuary-policies-on-crime-and-the-economy/>

Furthermore, the preemption measures proposed in this bill are just bad policy. It prevents communities from taking the actions they've decided are best for their community, including improving access to voting. This keeps Kansas from learning the best solutions about how public policies work in practice,<sup>2</sup> while also limiting a community's ability to make sure legal voters have access to the polls.

Preventing local communities from enacting policies that support and protect immigrants is also detrimental to public health. Bills like HB 2717 only serve to increase a "climate of hostility and fear that adds to stress and reluctance to seek services, and that deters or denies tangible health care and social services. These negative impacts on social determinants of health threaten the welfare not only of immigrant persons, but also the welfare and social fabric of the broader communities in which they live and work."<sup>3</sup>

HB 2717 will make our state less inclusive, less prosperous, and less safe. It is more important now than ever that Kansas serves as a welcoming beacon. For all of these reasons, Kansas Appleseed opposes HB 2717.

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<sup>2</sup> Briffault, R. "The Challenge of the New Preemption." *Stanford Law Review* (2018). p. 1998.

[https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3091&context=faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3091&context=faculty_scholarship)

<sup>3</sup> Hall, M., Mann-Jackson, L., and Rhodes, S. "State Preemption of Local Immigration "Sanctuary" Policies: Legal Considerations." *American Journal of Public Health* (2021). <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2020.306018>