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Opponent Testimony of HB2717  
For the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

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Chair Olson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am a resident of Topeka, Kansas and I am deeply opposed to HB 2717, which would ban our local government from enacting Safe and Welcoming policies within our community. Enacting this law would be government overreach, while banning a policy that helps make our cities safer and our communities healthier.

This bill is fundamentally anti-democratic, both in process and in result. This bill hearing was scheduled with hardly any notice, leaving many engaged Kansans out of the legislative process and stifling public input in a law debated in what is supposedly the people's house. The passing of this ordinance wasn't the first time a city in Kansas did so, only the most recent. The urgency assigned to this legislation isn't necessary, especially considering other similar ordinances have been in place for years without issue. Emergency action on legislation should be reserved for actual emergencies, not political stunts. This process has become so rushed that an amendment to this bill was so uncarefully written that it has turned it into more than legislation that undercuts home rule; it's become legislation that could disenfranchise many Kansas citizens who rely on local government IDs to vote such as veterans who use the Sedgwick County Veterans Discount Card or those in assisted care facilities who don't drive or receive government assistance- such as the elderly, or people with disabilities. Many local governments work with their citizenry to go above and beyond in helping ensure that Kansans can vote and locally issued IDs are an important part of that assistance. This does not make for safer elections either, considering that many forms of government issued photo IDs do not guarantee proof of citizenship. In fact, a law requiring proof of citizenship to vote in Kansas just cost the taxpayers millions of dollars in a resulting lawsuit over this unconstitutional legislation. Please do not repeat the mistakes of years past by passing more legislation that doesn't make our elections safer, just harder for us to participate in.

Home rule, that is, our local governments and police being able to engage with its community in a locally crafted way, is a cherished value in Kansas. It should not be the legislature's place to require our local police departments to take on the role of a federal immigration agent, which is exactly what this law does. A safe and welcoming policy lets the police do the police's job, which should be focused on solving crimes. By requiring the police to take on an additional unfunded burden which should be reserved for a federal agency of tracking down and deporting immigrants who are not criminals, you actually make our communities less safe by wasting the resources of our local police departments and deterring immigrants and their families from reporting when they are the victims of crimes due to fear of deportation.

This doesn't just impact the undocumented community, but all of us. Many families in Kansas are "mixed status" families which include people with different levels of documentation. Those families are a part of

our community. In fact, 1 in 14 Kansans are foreign born, but they are Kansans now. They make up nearly 10% of Kansas's workforce, and study after study show they pay their fair share in taxes. They are our neighbors and friends. They attend our churches and schools. They are Kansans. Furthermore, harsh policing of immigrant communities often times leads to increased racial profiling, regardless of the unenforceable ban on racial profiling that was added to this bill. This is a harmful practice to encourage in our police force and will continue to drive a wedge between members of our community and our local police.

Lastly, police doing the work of immigration agents doesn't benefit our communities or deter crime. You can look to Dodge City and Garden City as examples of seeing how this plays out. They are similar communities in terms of size, economic conditions, immigration populations, etc. but Garden City police contracts with ICE to work as immigration agents, while Dodge City doesn't. They have nearly identical crime rates. In Dodge City, the violent crime rate is 4.46 per 1,000 residents and in Garden City it is 4.94 per 1,000 residents. This police/immigration agent hybrid model doesn't make for safer communities. There's no benefit of this policy. Meanwhile, the Roeland Park and Lawrence police departments have enacted a safe and welcoming policy and they are perfectly safe communities.

In closing, I ask you to please vote no on HB2717, and instead support our local governments and police departments to enact whatever policy they know to be best for their community. Thank you all for your time and I hope you take my testimony into consideration.