

Dear Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Arnberger, Ranking Member Ruiz, and members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee: **I am contacting you to urge that you oppose HB 2717.**

I am writing you today as an elected Douglas County Commissioner, as well as a Court Advocate for victims of domestic violence & human trafficking. And I am also a lifelong Kansan who knows how integral immigrants and migrants have always been to building, farming, and serving communities across this state. I'm hopeful you too will recall that reality of our state's rich history, and realize that Kansas cannot function without those residents. **So I believe it is our responsibility as leaders to provide access and opportunity for them to live here safely.** My concerns about this proposed legislation are varied and numerous, I truly hope that this Committee will kill the bill. I urge you to please remain focused on the many real issues affecting Kansans today; I hope for our state officials to move forward together on policies & budget choices that are fundamentally focused on creating equity, opportunity, and vitality for all Kansans. **Consider how powerful it is to make the choice to create (rather than destroy) such opportunities, along with increased public safety – that is the work.**

As a County Commissioner who works on behalf of a community that believes in sanctuary policies, I do hope that elected officials in our state's Capitol respect local home rule authority. Our local community leaders know the needs and wishes of our residents best, please let us govern locally and do not allow for state government to interfere with carefully crafted local ordinances. It is evident to me that HB 2717 will effectively erode trust built amongst residents with varied citizenship and documentation statuses, and I urge each of you to think carefully about the varied implications of that consequence. It will also have a worsening effect on already escalating worker shortages across industries. Our state cannot afford to – nor should it aspire to – scare away anyone willing to accept low-wage and hard-labor jobs that businesses are most desperate to fill right now, especially while actively pursuing new industry and labor opportunities for Kansas. **I implore each of you to appreciate the value of letting people provide for their families while also actively contributing to our economy. Appreciate how much immigrants do to sustain our agricultural, building, and hospitality industries in particular.** Consider how the failure of federal government to pass immigration reform has put them, along with state/local officials, in a position of constant confusion and nuanced choices. We need you to apply more pressure on Congress to proactively legislate solutions, rather than preempt local legislation and promote unconstitutional profiling.

Trust local governments to understand the clear delineation of civil and criminal law, and what local police have a duty to enforce and respond to. The City of Lawrence ordinance in fact does *not* ban cooperation with federal immigration authorities if the safety of the public is at risk, it simply asks officers to distinguish between federal, state, and local laws as well as criminal vs. civil violations. The ordinance is about prioritizing public safety along with respecting the capacity limits of police. **Please truly consider the burden of an unfunded state mandate on local law enforcement officers to actively enforce federal immigration law, which is not what they have been trained to do.** I expect that you also realize how overstretched most agencies already are with responding to daily threats on public safety such as gun violence, domestic & sexual abuse, untreated mental health crisis, etc.

The passage of HB 2717 would in fact harm public safety by creating an increase in unreported crime, deepening fear and distrust of law enforcement amongst current Kansas residents who happen to also be foreign-born. **Those Kansas residents deserve the same level of access to systems & protection of the law that we enjoy.**

This legislation, if passed, would dial back local community efforts toward addressing family violence, property theft, employment violations, consumer exploitation, and a long list of other crimes that pose real danger to Kansans every day. Consider instead the beauty of creating more safe & welcoming communities across Kansas. Thank you for your service to our state, and for your careful consideration today. Please kill this bill now.

In Gratitude,  
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Chair, Board of Douglas County Commissioners