

February 13, 2017

Sister Janice Thome
Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence
Parents as Teachers, USD457

Senate Bills 157 and 158
Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee.
Chairman Sen. Jacob LaTurner and Members of the Committee:

I have served families for 20 years in both of my half time positions here in Garden City. In our Ministry of Presence I serve the economic poor and help them access the resources they need. In Parents as Teachers I am a teen parent educator. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony against SB 157 and 158 and for taking the time to consider it.

As a home visitor I witness the life from the viewpoint of parents in their homes. Our families are concerned about the quality of education for their children with the continuing budget cuts. In my ministry with the poor the parents are struggling to pay their bills and provide food for their children. Medical bills for those who fall in the cracks force them to make payment arrangements that will take years to complete.

These are real problems for many Kansas parents and families. These bills seem to be taking attention away from solving our state's budget problems. I feel we are robbing our children of their best possible future by failing to give them the medical care, nutrition and education that they need to become our future leaders.

We would need far more Kansas Highway Patrol officers to enforce federal immigration law and they would need the training to do so. I think this would be wasting Kansas law enforcement resources as well as making the budget shortfall so much worse than it already is.

Garden City Police and Finney County Sherriff departments cooperate with ICE when they come with warrants. They always have and they will continue to do so. Other counties and cities are doing the same. This makes SB 158 unnecessary.

As a Kansan, I believe our state should be a welcoming land of opportunity. My great grandparents came here with very little. They worked hard and raised their children to be good citizens who contributed to our state and country. The immigrants and refugees I interact with are hard workers who want the best for their children and want to contribute to our state and nation just like my ancestors. I want them to be given that freedom.

If one wants only to be practical, focus on the economy of southwest Kansas which is agriculturally based. There is no way the packing plants, dairies, feedlots and larger farms can continue without the immigrant and refugee population. If the anti-immigrant and refugee measures are taken, southwest Kansas will become a drain on our state as its economy dries up.

Please vote NO on SB 157 and SB 158 and let Kansas get back to fixing the real problems facing real families.

Thank you Chairman LaTurner and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.
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