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SB 446  
WRITTEN ONLY

Amanda Vega-Mavec, Ed.D.  
avega-mavec@elcentroinc.com  
El Centro, Inc. - VP of Programs

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition of SB 446, which prohibits citizens of other countries from owning land in Kansas. As president/CEO of El Centro, Inc., I know this bill would unnecessarily and unintentionally discriminate against Latinos and others throughout Kansas.

El Centro, Inc. has locations in Wyandotte and Johnson counties, but we advocate on behalf of Latinos across Kansas. We understand that National security is a serious matter, but laws that restrict our rights in the name of security need to be narrowly written to avoid unintended consequences. This bill is far too broad. A bill like this needs to be specific, clear, and narrow about who it is seeking to prohibit from buying land in our state to ensure it doesn't have a negative impact on the rights of our immigrant neighbors seeking out the American dream through farming and small business ownership.

El Centro, Inc. and other organizations are working to address inequity in homeownership and this bill hinders that work. Working Kansans – including hard-working Hispanics and Latinos – play a vital role in our economy, in our communities, and in all of our lives, and deserve the opportunity to be home and land owners. Meatpacking plants in Southwest Kansas account for 25 to 30% of the nation's beef. The Kansas economy – and the US economy – would crumble without the Hispanic and Latino workforce in Kansas, including those who do not yet have full citizenship. We help feed America, and should not have to ask for government permission to legally buy property here. Government interference on property rights is not a Kansas value. Kansans value freedom, liberty, and prosperity. We must be cautious about our history of legislation prohibiting immigrants from owning land in the United States and ensure that any legislation seeking to keep Kansas land in the hands of U.S. citizens does not encourage discrimination.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of SB 446. While we understand the need to address national security, this is not the answer.