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Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber in Opposition to HB 2491, Requiring state agencies to make quarterly reports to the secretary of state with the names and addresses of noncitizens receiving public benefits.

House Committee on Elections, Rep. Pat Proctor, Chair - February 5, 2026

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

I serve as Executive Director for Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaitth issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” on a variety of important social and economic justice issues. I rise today in opposition to HB 2491.

As a faith-based organization rooted in the inherent dignity of every human person, we view this proposal with profound moral concern. History has shown us, through many dark chapters, that the creation of government lists targeting specific classes of people—particularly based on their legal status or national origin—never leads to greater security, but rather to the erosion of neighborly trust and the precursor to systemic harm. By isolating a specific group of people for “quarterly reporting,” this bill revives a legacy of state-sponsored surveillance that treats our neighbors as threats to be tracked rather than members of a community to be served.

Furthermore, this legislation serves no legitimate administrative purpose other than to codify the legal intimidation of already vulnerable communities across Kansas. Forcing state agencies to act as an arm of immigration surveillance creates a climate of fear that will inevitably deter eligible families from seeking the basic life-sustaining benefits they are entitled to by law. As people of faith, we believe that our public policy should be measured by how it treats the “stranger in our gates.” This bill does the opposite: it weaponizes the bureaucracy of public assistance to cast a shadow of suspicion over Kansans who “don’t have the right papers”, many of whom are our congregants, our coworkers, and our neighbors, purely for the sake of political posturing.

“When you welcome the stranger, you welcome me...” (Matthew 25:35) is a cornerstone of mainline religious thought, in Christianity and in other faith traditions. I direct you to the following words of Bishop Tracy S. Malone, President of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church from Epiphany last year¹:

As United Methodists we have firmly declared through our Social Principles that we are called to actively welcome the migrant, immigrant, and refugee among us.

- Affirming the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants and refugees.
- Recognizing that displaced people are particularly vulnerable as their in-between status often provides them with few protections and benefits, leaving them open to exploitation, violence and abuse.

¹ President of the Council of Bishops The United Methodist Church’s [“Pastoral Letter Addressing the Plight of Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees in the US, Epiphany 2025”](#)

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- Urging one another to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into our congregations, providing concrete support, to them including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and **assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment** and other kinds of support.
- *Opposing all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants or refugees.*²

Our faith traditions teach us that a community's strength is found in how it protects, not persecutes, those on its margins. This bill flies in the face of that. By mandating the unnecessary collection and reporting of names and addresses, this bill entrenches a path of exclusion and state-sanctioned hostility, over the values of compassion and community. Kansas families deserve to live without the constant threat of being thrown on a list by the very government that should be focused on the common good.

Please vote NO on HB 2491.

Thank you.

² Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, The Political Community Basic Rights and Freedoms, Section G. Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees).