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New Frontiers, a project of Loud Light Civic Action
Written Oral Opponent Testimony of HB 2771
For the House Federal & State Affairs Committee

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Chair Kessler and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Alejandro Rangel-Lopez from Dodge City, and I am speaking to you today as the Campaign Manager of New Frontiers. We're a southwest Kansas based project of the nonpartisan, nonprofit organization Loud Light Civic Action. I'm here today to urge you to oppose HB 2771 as it would allow the unbridled expansion of federal overreach into our backyard by making county sheriffs do their bidding when it comes to immigration enforcement. Immigration is a federal issue and we should not be using Kansas taxpayer dollars to cover the cost of housing, detaining, and processing undocumented individuals when the agency in charge of doing so is already the highest funded federal law enforcement agency in existence. The fact of the matter is that allowing local sheriffs to detain folks with no criminal charges for up to 48 hours as stipulated in this bill will use up space and money earmarked for legitimate threats to Kansas communities. Aside from the increased cooperation between Kansas sheriffs and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that this entails, it necessitates insurance pools cover enforcement of federal law in addition to state and local ordinances, and forces Kansas taxpayers to foot the court bill if LEOs conducting federal immigration enforcement actions are found to have committed a civil rights violation. We know that Kansans want to feel safe where they live. Turning every county jail in our state into an immigration detention facility does nothing to demonstrably increase safety and only serves to diminish the trust that immigrant communities have in their local law enforcement. For these reasons and more, I urge you to oppose HB 2771 and preserve a clear separation between local and federal law enforcement.

HB 2771 creates an unfunded mandate for Kansas sheriffs to enforce federal law even though law enforcement agencies are already stretched thin with local mental health response, gun violence, and substance abuse cases: Immigration law is a federal issue. Local law enforcement serving immigrant communities have worked hard for decades in some towns to build trust with the people they serve. Proponents fail to consider the impact this law would have on existing police burdens and public trust, this bill would have long-lasting impacts on civic, economic, and social involvement for all immigrants, not just those who are undocumented.

This bill would harm public safety by increasing instances of unreported crime and diminish cooperation with police and courts: When local police and sheriffs work double duty and turn local residents over to ICE or share information with ICE on people whom they suspect are unauthorized immigrants, it has a [chilling effect on public safety](#) which is the primary responsibility of city police departments and county sheriffs. Immigrants, whether legally present or not, learn to fear the police and do not call them to report crimes. Thus domestic violence, auto theft, employment violations, and a myriad of other crimes experienced by Kansans would go unabated due to this breach of trust between local law enforcement and the communities they serve.

This is big government overreach and forces Kansans to foot the bill for the actions of untrained federal agents: The residents of localities across Kansas and their elected officials know their communities and are the best judges of their needs. We are perplexed that elected officials in Topeka who constantly complain about government overreach and are proponents of small government would

at the same time choose to legislate like Big Brother and dictate to a municipality or county that they have to foot the bill for immigration enforcement actions as well as any judicial settlements that may come up. This is after ICE already holds the title as the [highest funded federal law enforcement agency](#). To put it plainly, HB 2771 will inevitably result in our property taxes going up because not only are we paying them to address local issues, now we've gotta cover federal law as well.

I'll end my testimony with a few anecdotes. First, I ask you to evaluate who and where these anti-immigrant bills are coming from. Proponents, in my opinion, want this body to believe that there are ruthless and horrible immigrants in our own backyards just waiting for the opportunity to cause harm to whoever they can. These are folks from towns who unfortunately for them, have for the most part a severe lack of immigrants in their communities. I know this because I'm from the opposite kind of place. Dodge City is a rural town that would be known for nothing but its Old West past if it weren't for the immigrants who chose to work at the beefpacking plants down there about 50 or so years ago at this point. Far from the dying and sullen small towns that dot our prairies, Dodge alongside Liberal and Garden City took a chance on migrants and are now some of the only towns in this state continually bucking the trend of rural population decline.

Take it from me, someone who was born and raised in Dodge City and has never spent a minute living in a state other than Kansas in my 25 years on this Earth: if the national rhetoric being used as a justification to round up migrants and push through this bill right now were true, would southwest Kansas, the region I am proud to call home, not be a war zone unlike those we see on national news outlets? I know the truth because I have lived it every day of my life. Immigrant Kansans are just that. Kansans. People like my parents Martín and Lucia who worked at the beef packing plants for over two decades each to put food on the table, shoes on our feet, and a roof over our heads. People who know the value of hard work, saved up just enough of their money to own their home, and are now proud business owners after buying a liquor store from a Laotian family who got their start the same exact way. This is the story of Dodge City and of our state, if we let it be. If you want to see it for yourself, you can be my guest and come out to southwest Kansas. Consider this a formal invitation.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject HB 2771 for the good of Kansas. This bill serves only to sow distrust between law enforcement and the communities they serve which will result in crimes going unreported, decreasing the safety of all Kansans; all while we foot the bill with higher insurance and legal costs. Sheriffs should remain focused on protecting and serving the locals who fund their departments with their taxpayer dollars. Lastly, Sheriffs have a fiscal responsibility to the other elected officials who create their budget, it's unreasonable to say their utilization of county resources for federal enforcement of immigration law should not be overseen or run by the county commissioners in their jurisdiction. Again, I encourage you to vote in opposition to HB 2771 and I am happy to stand for questions when appropriate.

Thank You.