

FR: Connie Brown Collins,
Voter Rights Network of Wyandotte County
Date: February 24, 2023

Dear Chairman Kessler and House Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

My name is Connie Brown Collins, Founder/Director of Voter Rights Network of Wyandotte County. I live in Kansas City, Kansas. We host regular educational meetings on voting rights, human rights, and other pertinent issues impacting our communities. Our members include a number of participating organizations and individuals, from both Wyandotte and Johnson Counties and the region.

I strongly oppose HB 2771 because it increases ICE powers by expanding local law enforcement's cooperation and enforcement authority of federal operations.

Granting local Sheriffs the authority to detain individuals up to 48 hours for ICE can lead to unintended consequences. These may include civil rights violations and undermining trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement. Local law enforcement's expanded cooperation with federal immigration authorities could result in racial profiling or wrongful detention.

Further, there may be unknown financial and legal burdens for counties, particularly if lawsuits arise from delays in holding individuals on ICE detainers, for instance, if a detainee does not have immediate access to proof of citizenship documents. These changes might also deter victims and witnesses from reporting crimes, fearing immigration consequences.

HB 2771 could place an undue burden on local governments and law enforcement agencies. The arrangement could increase liability risks for cities and counties, potentially resulting in higher insurance costs and legal expenses. The requirements for legal defense and state payment of judgments could strain public resources, diverting funds from other critical services.

Requiring the state to pay lawsuit judgments related to immigration enforcement could significantly increase the financial burden on Kansas taxpayers. The bill may expose the state to higher liability risks, especially in cases where local law enforcement officers are sued for actions taken while assisting federal immigration authorities. This could result in increased insurance premiums and greater legal expenses for both state and local governments. Furthermore, diverting public funds to cover these judgments might reduce resources available for essential public services, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Additionally, the mandate for the Attorney General to represent agencies and officers in litigation related to immigration enforcement could divert state legal resources from other pressing matters.

Perhaps most importantly, the bill's provisions granting sheriffs the power to independently enter into 287(g) agreements with ICE, without county commission approval, further bypass established checks and balances. Such a shift may diminish local oversight and hinder transparency in how immigration enforcement decisions are made and implemented.

In summary, HB 2771 not only exposes Kansas to significant financial and legal risks but also threatens the autonomy of local governments, erodes community trust, and potentially diverts resources away from core public services. For these reasons, we strongly urge legislators to oppose this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie Brown Collins

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Voter Rights Network of Wyandotte County