

Hello,

My name is Kathleen Alonso. I am a resident of Liberal, KS and have been for the last 24 years. Seward County's demographics have changed a lot in recent years and according to the 2020 census data our county has the largest hispanic population in the state of Kansas at 65.5%. I work as a Hispanic Outreach Coordinator for Liberal Area Coalition for Families. I focus on increasing civic engagement and education, as well as helping with food distribution and reducing food insecurity. A majority of our community are Spanish speakers. Some of them lack proper documentation. With many language, economic and status barriers I know firsthand the anguish and fear many in my community feel when it comes to reaching out for help with resources. Many are afraid to seek help with basic necessities and face even an even greater fear when having encounters with officers. Bill HB 2717 would be not only harmful for our communities but it would also drive families out. If you're familiar with Southwest Kansas, you know that we are majority immigrant community members. If it wasn't for us we'd be ghost towns. All the plants in the area employ immigrants and refugees. Immigrants have sustained the Southwest economy and will continue to do so for years to come but I'm afraid a bill like this will have the opposite effect. Not only would it put a strain on our already short staffed local police department but it will also increase the crime that goes unreported. I am pleading as a long time resident of Liberal to please oppose this harmful bill that will have irrevocable consequences for not only my community but also Southwest KS.

Thank you.