

Testimony of Angelica Plata

Student from Dodge City

Before the Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Kansas State House of Representatives

Hearing on HB2717: Concerning the Prohibition of Local Entities from Preventing the Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws

March 15th, 2022

Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Arnberger, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I want to thank you all for giving me the chance to share this testimony before you today regarding HB2717 concerning the prohibition of local entities from preventing the enforcement of federal immigration laws. My name is Angelica Plata. I am a recent Dodge City High School graduate working as an intern for the Ford County Attorney and as Dodge City's organizer for the New Frontiers Project. I am writing to advise you to vote against HB2717. This legislation encourages and permits federal overreach that takes power away from local communities such as my own and will do more harm to our immigrant communities than help them.

I was born and raised in Dodge City, one of our state's only minority-majority populations. It's rich with cultures like mine, like my friends', and those of strangers alike. With my involvement in my community and the work I do, I can confidently tell you that immigrants are a vital element to the way my city and this state have grown and prospered economically, socially, and politically. Growing up, I noticed immigrants doing jobs that keep their respective towns running smoothly, the jobs that others didn't have the will to do. School janitors, lunch ladies, meat plant workers, and construction workers, to name a few. I saw people who could be part of my family in those workers. My uncles, aunts, grandmothers, and grandfathers with aching hands and tired eyes wanting nothing more than to be better for their families. They work tirelessly, they pay their taxes, and they engage in our community.

I understand that you believe that because this bill is only targeting undocumented immigrants, it will only slightly impact our communities or not impact them at all. This is not the case. According to the American Immigration Council, one in eleven workers in Kansas is an immigrant, and 75,000 undocumented immigrants made up 35 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016. These numbers have risen and will continue to grow with time. You can imagine the kind of effect this bill would have on our workforce and our economy as it will be slowly implemented throughout the state. Until a couple

of years ago, I did not. My parents rushed me to my aunt's house, where she had a newborn baby and her three other children in the living room. I learned that while leaving his workplace on his way to the hospital to see his fourth son be born, he was detained by ICE. I was instructed not to tell my cousins, but to just distract them from the harsh reality their mother had to break to them within the next hour. I cannot tell you what happened after that, other than my mom did some paperwork and a couple of days later, my dad was bringing me to pick my uncle up. Most people aren't that lucky, like my friend Victoria who's dad was deported our freshman year of high school leaving her without the two-income household she once had and without a father in the country who will watch her walk the stage this upcoming May.

Allowing this legislation to pass implies that our smaller governments can't make their own decisions about their people. This would also take power away from local communities and police departments and turn them into pawns of a greater government entity that doesn't know what's in their people's best interest.

I am not coming to you as an organizer. I am coming to you as a constituent you have chosen to represent. So I heavily encourage you to represent us, not only because it's your job, but because communities like mine will not recover if you don't. You must protect your people because no one will if you don't.

In closing, I urge you to vote against HB2717. Thank you all so much for your time, and I hope you consider this testimony in your decision.