

Chairman Patton and Members of this Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I am a citizen of Lawrence, KS, a member of a nonprofit working to stop climate change, and have participated in plenty of peaceful protests. I also vote at all levels of government and have done my best to do so since I became able to vote. I am writing in opposition of Senate Bill 172.

Unfortunately I am unable to provide spoken testimony because I am appearing on a panel for youth concerned with the climate at the time of voting. This feels especially topical, given the assertions that Senate Bill 172 is meant to "protect young people from themselves." We young people know what the threats to us are. The threats are climate change, police brutality, and unjust criminalization, among others. It is our right to peaceful protest under the constitution, and such protest is an important part of securing the rights we have today, for African Americans, women, and other groups. We still have a long way to go in those areas and we have a long way to go to protect our futures from destruction of the climate.

This bill is not about protecting infrastructure. It is about criminalizing a constitutional right. We already have laws against acts of terrorism and sabotage. This bill would create four new crimes with extreme punishment that does not fit the act.

Instead of criminalizing free speech and peaceful protest, perhaps consider criminalizing the destruction of Kansas water, land, and air by companies who profit off of our deaths. The polar vortex in February got the most news in Texas due to Texas not having the infrastructure to address cold weather. But did you know that at least three people died in Lawrence alone? Even one death is an unacceptable loss. This kind of extreme weather *is* climate change. It's here. And it is only worsened by the lack of proper action by government bodies like the Kansas State Senate.

I urge you to reject this bill that purportedly protects young people from ourselves, and instead focus on actually protecting us and our futures by addressing climate change.

Thank you for your time.

Mattie Bell
2211 Tennessee St.
Lawrence, KS
66046