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March 17, 2019

Chairman Barker and members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB2003. I am here today as a representative of El Centro, Inc. El Centro's mission is to aid our community through social, economic, and educational opportunities.

And this is exactly what this bill will open up: social and economic opportunities for Kansas and its residents. This bill will provide a wider range for eligibility on who is able to get a driver's license, be part of this society, and have one of the many experiences we consider as "the rite of passage" in our culture.

The eligibility portion is crucial due to the fact that it allows several members of our communities to now get a driver's license. And no this does not only include immigrants, it includes many other marginalized groups such as: foster care youth, abuse victims, individuals experiencing homelessness, and many more. It provides them a form of identification that not only opens up doors to be able to drive while meeting regulations, but something even more simple, that many take for granted: have an identity. This is a step forward into welcoming everyone, all our neighbors, back to our society. An official identification is one of the first things we are asked to provide, for social and public services, at the utility company, at our banks, and even at restaurants sometimes. Not to mention that an ID is vital for seeking access to health services at health and family clinic and a variety of social services facilities. With this change, it opens doors for individuals to integrate themselves back to our society norms.

It is hard for one to resettle and restart their lives, as they move on from a dire situation, in our culture. Without an ID, people dismiss you quickly and treat you differently, and at times inhumanely. For example, if a victim has run out of their house to get to safety, and they did not have time to grab the required documentation that states they are "someone" it is much harder for them to get help, and even after they get help, to resettle their lives. They will have to replace each document and our system is lengthy, not only will they need to re-establish all their paperwork, but will need transportation, and will need to develop a good plan that will allow them to accomplish each step in the right order since one set of documents are usually required to obtain the other. Getting all required paperwork takes longer than we think, it's complicated, and there are so many loops.

However, this is not all, at a personal level, it can, also, be considered a "rite of passage." Due to not having all the required documentation, this was a passage that I miss out on at the age of 16. While many of my friends were celebrating getting their learners permits and temporary licenses, they



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shared stories and experiences that I was not able to even attain. I did not understand why at the moment, but I can tell you it did not feel good. There was a feeling of isolation and shame that came with it, because I could not have this experience with them... I eventually did, years later, but what about the next teenagers that comes after me? Will they feel the same and will they be able to understand why?

Diving deeper into the subject, we also know that when one does not have an identity and they go into our justice system, they may become lost in it. Having a valid ID or driver's license can avoid separation of families, because when a human does not have an "identity" then how can you find them? How do you look for them in our systems? The answers are: try later, we do not have anyone under that name, our information does not match so they cannot leave, etc. This is when children end up in detention centers, when adults get taken into custody and they can't make bail because there was no one to contact or because they didn't have the proper information and so on. No, this is not a solution for all these problems, but it is a step forward for us to stop losing our neighbors and to limit the separation of families.

This bill is a step forward to welcome all residents of Kansas, even the ones whom are less fortunate, and are trying to integrate themselves, whom want to do things right in more than just one aspect.

We, El Centro, Inc. take a full stand on supporting bill HB2003 as we see it as one more step into taking care of all our Kansans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for allowing me to testify in proposition of HB2003.

Whole heartedly,

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Lead Community Organizer at El Centro, Inc.

Wyandotte County Resident