



DISTRICT UNION LOCAL TWO

To: Hon. Representative John Barker and Members of the Committee

From: Martin Rosas, President, UFCW District Union Local 2

Re: Testimony in Opposition to the HB 2717

Date: March 13, 2022

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Union of Food and Commerce Workers (UFCW) District Union Local Two, representing more than 11,000 essential workers in the food-supply industry through the state of Kansas, we write to you to urge strong opposition to the HB 2717 attempt to criminalize immigrant communities in the state of Kansas. This is an agenda that affects, among many others, the families of thousands of workers in the agricultural and food-processing industries including many of the workers we represent in the state.

According to the most recent report of the New American Economic Institute¹, foreign-born workers make up for 34.5% of the employees working in the food-processing industry in the state, and 25.6% of those work in the agricultural industry. It is of public knowledge that these industries have faced for decades a shortage in their workforce due to the demanding conditions and exhausting work hours that come associated to these jobs. It is of high importance to maintain the immigrant workforce in the state as they greatly contribute to the state economy. The most recent public health crisis is a proof of this statement. Thousands of immigrants, considered essentials to the state infrastructure, stood up through the pandemic to keep the food supply in all Kansas' tables.

We encourage the enforcement of federal immigration laws to prevent those who break state laws or represent a threat to public safety from finding an easy way out in the state of Kansas. However, it is a reality that many in the immigrant workforce make part of mixed status families: U.S. citizens, DACA recipients, legal residents and undocumented immigrants may share the same roof, and the current immigration laws do not offer viable alternatives to resolve this issue.

Ordinances like the Safe and Welcoming Act adopted in Wyandotte County only search to promote a sense of welcoming to hard-worker immigrants and their families, who have been established for years in the area, make part of the community, and contribute to its economy. It also encourages them to denounce without fear of retaliation whenever they are victim or witness crimes against their personal safety or the large community helping to build trust with law enforcement departments. However, the HB 2717 presented before the Honorable members of this Committee is written to send a dangerous message of fear and division. **Thus, the UFCW District Union Local Two stands in strong opposition to the underlying bill and ask Kansas government to put all its residents' safety and wellbeing first and ignore this attempt to use a divisive bill to create fear, misinform and deny the economic contributions, and cultural richness that immigrants bring to the state.**

Martin Rosas, President
Alfonso Figueroa, Secretary-Treasurer
Tina Chapman, Recorder

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I thank the committee for allowing us to testify and should its Hon. Members have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at (316) 941-4053.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Rosas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Martin Rosas, UFCW Local Two President
UFCW International Vice President