

Stephanie Iser, Safe & Welcoming Roeland Park
Bill Number: HB2717 – Opposed
Written Testimony Only

My name is Stephanie Iser, and I live in Roeland Park, KS in the zip code of 66205. I represent the Safe & Welcoming Roeland Park Neighbor-led movement. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony; I would have come in person but I am unable to take time off work without enough advance notice about the hearing taking place.

I would like to share more about the group that I represent and why we oppose HB2717. For 2+ years, my neighbors and I worked to make our city more safe, welcoming, and inclusive to those that live, work, shop, and worship in Roeland Park. Our movement of about 200 residents, led by a group of neighbors, worked to understand needs, study and recommend policies, and petition our elected leaders to be more inclusive and welcoming to all, regardless of anyone's immigration status. Our cohort includes both naturalized and foreign-born residents.

During our work, we learned that community members felt unsafe to contact the police when a crime had happened. We learned that the census was not as successful with Spanish speaking residents. We also learned of neighbors that had experienced different forms of racial and ethnic profiling throughout Johnson County and Kansas due to being mistaken as foreign born or non-citizen. To address these issues, we helped enact an ordinance, approved unanimously by our city council in December 2020, which put limitations on how our city staff and police can cooperate with ICE, reducing cooperation primarily to assistance with threats to public safety and that which is required by law only.

Even with the amendments, the HB2717 bill creates unsafe conditions that would hamper police - immigrant relations, resulting in less people feeling safe to contact the police. For example, HB2717 would allow for officers to share private information about resident's immigration status with ICE, even in instances where it's not federally required of them. On the other hand, the Roeland Park ordinance limits private information sharing with ICE about residents to only that which is required by law, except for a few instances where public safety would otherwise be threatened. This is just one example of how HB2717 would nullify laws that respond to Kansan's needs for safety and improved immigrant-police relations.

HB2717 is government overreach, and would take away elected officials' power to do what's best for local communities. It would rollback decisions that leaders have already made and undo efforts to be more inclusive, assuring, and welcoming to immigrants and community members who have been questioned about their immigration status due to being mistaken as being foreign-born. We strongly urge you to oppose this bill and allow our locally elected leaders to work with the community and police to set the tone for positive immigrant-police relations in our region.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for your dedicated service to the state of Kansas, its people, and our local jurisdictions.