

Thank you very much for the honor to address you this morning.

My name is Sulma Arias and you are looking at the face of an undocumented immigrant from El Salvador. I crossed the border alone, at the age of twelve.

I was caught, interrogated for hours and finally escorted out by an officer who told me he was going to turn his head the other way for 10 minutes and pretend he didn't see me cross to the other side. That was almost 30 years ago.

An undocumented immigrant is not all that I have been. I have also been a church planter, working with Latino immigrants in poor areas of Wichita to help them establish and lead churches. I have been a business and I have led national and local campaigns to better the lives of millions of Latinos in this country AND, my most precious and valuable gift to you, is my three daughters who are here with me today, Genesis who will be attending Georgetown University in DC next year and could someday be your next President, Tiffany who will be a freshman in college next year and plans to get her PHD in physical therapy so she can set up a practice here in Kansas and Vivian who is a straight A student at Maize Middle School.

I want you to look at my face and the face of my children and remember that which is good, honest and human. I want you to remember us as American. I'm asking you to hold on to that because there are those who stand here and tell you that we come to steal, to kill and to line up at the voting polls to vote fraudulently.

They will also say that those like me are a burden to our state's economy. That is why I want you to know that I have been a single mother for 8 years and my children are not on health-wave nor have I ever received public assistance.

I'm opposed to the rushed implementation on the birth certificate requirement because of the broader implications that it has for my community and for my children.

This bill was passed in part on the wrong perception that there is a threat from undocumented immigrants who might try to sabotage our elections. Even though there had only been 7 cases documented in the last ** years.

The wrong perception is what I'm concern about, immigrants perceiving a message that says we are not wanted here, that we are accused of being criminals and draining our state economy. That the only message my kids and Latino kids who will be the biggest minority in the near future is that they are not wanted here.

That instead of you sending a message of unity you are sending a message that divides us. Are we in danger of being invaded? Yes we are, but not by immigrants, we are in danger of being invaded by FEAR, ignorance, and bigotry.

We are in danger of losing our HOPE for the future by marginalizing and disenfranchising those who will be in charge of preserving it.

Today, instead of talking about how we set up more roadblocks for those who look like me, we should be talking about how we will integrate them into our wonderful state. We should be working with churches and community groups to set up integration committees to teach English classes, civic participation and encouraging people to become citizens in order to vote. We should be learning from the richness in culture and work ethic they bring to us, instead of sending them the message that they are not welcomed.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the committee I want you to look at my daughters and find within yourselves the courage to vote for your HOPES and not your FEARS.

Thank you