



*March 29, 2022 - Written testimony in opposition of House Bill 2717*

*To: Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs*

*From: Asma Easa, Policy Manager of State & Local Initiatives, American Immigration Council  
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My name is Asma Easa and I am the Policy Manager of State and Local Initiatives at the American Immigration Council (the Council), an organization that works to create a more welcoming America—one that provides a fair process for immigrants and adopts immigration laws and policies that take into account the needs of the U.S. economy.

I am testifying to express strong opposition to HB 2717, a bill that effectively compels state and local law enforcement to perform immigration enforcement duties. This policy would create a hostile environment in Kansas, potentially causing contributing members of the immigrant community to leave the state as a result, negatively affecting the state's workforce in key industries like meat processing, construction, and hospitality.

The Council has worked with leaders in government, business, and civil society across the country to recognize the crucial role immigrants are playing in state and local economies, including in some of the most in-demand fields like agriculture and food production, manufacturing, construction, and transportation and warehousing. In order to remain competitive and meet critical workforce shortages, Kansas cannot afford to enact policies that could lead to a large decline in tax revenue due to population loss, exacerbate labor shortages for several key industries in the state, or compromise public safety by eroding trust in local law enforcement.

To help illustrate why this measure would be harmful to Kansas, and why the Council opposes HB 2717, we have conducted quantitative research on the impact immigrants and refugees already have on the state of Kansas. What we found is striking. According to American Immigration Council analysis of 2019 American Community Survey:

- **Kansas is home to more than 203,385 immigrants, making up 7 percent of the state's population.** Immigrants and refugees play an outsize role in industries critical to Kansas' economy. In 2019, immigrants and refugees made up:
  - 35 percent of animal slaughtering and processing workers
  - 17 percent of construction workers
  - 15 percent of STEM (science, engineering, technology, and math) workers, including 20 percent of computer systems design and related services workers

- 7 percent of health aides.
- **Immigrants in Kansas are critical to addressing the state’s workforce shortages across the skills and education spectrum**, with 82 percent of immigrant Kansans being of working age (ages 16-64) compared to 61 percent of their U.S.-born counterparts. Not only did the state’s 12,164 immigrant entrepreneurs create jobs, they generated a total business income of \$334.2 million.
- **In 2019, immigrant households in Kansas contributed billions of dollars in federal income, state, and local taxes, and held a tremendous amount of spending power.** Immigrants paid \$1.5 billion in taxes — including \$591.9 million in state and local taxes — and held \$4.4 billion in spending power that is reinjected into the state and local economies. The state’s more than 67,000 undocumented immigrants, 88 percent of whom are of working age, paid \$147.3 million in taxes — including \$69.9 million in state and local taxes — and held \$1.2 billion in spending power.

These proposed policies don’t just affect undocumented Kansans, they threaten to create a hostile environment for mixed status families and immigrants generally who may fear racial profiling.

Kansas risks losing not only a critical workforce, but souring relations between local law enforcement and immigrant communities, eroding the trust within communities that allows immigrants to work with police in reporting and investigating crimes without fear of retribution or potential deportation. This bill will limit local governments’ ability to determine how they will prioritize and allocate their resources, and expose local law enforcement agencies to potential liability for constitutional violations. I encourage the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs to oppose the passage of HB 2717.

Thank you for your consideration,

Asma Easa  
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