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JAY T. ARMBRISTER
SHERIFF

STACY SIMMONS
UNDERSHERIFF

To: House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

From: Sheriff Jay Armbrister

Date: 03.13.2022

Re: Testimony in Opposition of HB2717

I have read this bill and frankly, I cannot read what is trying to be accomplished with this bill. As a local law enforcement official, it is my duty to provide security and protection for ALL members of my community, no matter their race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual preference, age, physical handicap, etc. I take this very seriously and what I see written between the lines of this bill is you will in essence 'knee-cap' my ability to do this. This bill would immediately place a fear into the heart of any person who may be present in my community not through the fullest of legal means and processes.

I feel like this conversation needs to be split directly in two. On one hand, you have a person who did not follow all procedures to obtain "legal" citizenship, and this is a problem separate from this bill. I have my own personal opinions on how our immigration systems need to be revamped to protect the person and not the system, but that is NOT what this bill is about. Then, on the other hand, you have a human being in your community who has been the victim of a crime, of which it could very well be a heinous crime, but due to the victim's or a family member's immigration status, they fear contacting their local law enforcement to report the crime for fear of deportation or detainment. Now, imagine the child of a family here in our country who has fallen victim to a predator in our community. Now, this child has to live with this crime, or worse yet, the ongoing crime simply for the worry of their immigration status. On top of that, this predator will remain in our community to re-offend and build his or her list of victims. I cannot abide by this, nor should we as law enforcement be a part of any system that would allow this to happen. This example alone goes against my pledge to my community to support and protect them from all enemies, both foreign and domestic.

Now, I ask you all... what is this bill intended to do? Is it your intention to wield local law enforcement as your 'club' to strike down "illegal immigration" in our state? Or, does this scenario I described above not bother you because the fear of this one scenario does not overcome your fear of our communities being overrun by persons who look and speak differently from you? In my community, I have not seen this and I find this national narrative to be wholly untrue. Do we have undocumented immigrants commit crimes in my community? Yes. Do our own community members and other citizens of this state and country commit crimes in my community at an exponentially higher rate? Absolutely!

Please allow each community the ability to decide what is best for OUR community. We live here everyday and we love our community like no others. Please let us take care our community members.

Much Love, Sheriff Jay Armbrister