

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2717
House Federal and State Affairs Committee
March 15, 2022
Room 346-S

Testimony of Dr. Mildred Edwards
Chief of Staff to Mayor Tyrone Garner
Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear on behalf of Mayor Tyrone Garner and the UG Board of Commissioners. After five years of research, deliberation and advocacy, the Board of Commissioners for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, KS voted to pass our safe and welcoming ordinance. This policy making action was not taken lightly nor in haste. The ordinance was passed because it is in the best interest in our residents.

Wyandotte County is the most racially and culturally diverse county in the state. This is a fact that we are most proud of. While our census reports our community to be approximately 30% Hispanic, our school district reports a student population that is 60% Hispanic, followed by a 30% African American student population. We know what is in the best interest of our community and passing the Safe and Welcoming ordinance a direct result of our knowing. We are in essence growing increasingly more Hispanic over time.

Our major concern with HB2717 is that it does not take into consideration what we know to be best for our own community. Further it infringes on our right to act in the best interest of our community and exercise related powers of governance as granted through the constitution. We believe that the state's decision to intervene in this policy making action, that was voted in the best interest of our residents, should be left to the policy makers that represent the community in which they have been voted.

We ask that the state not infringe upon our communities right to exercise the power to pass and implement our safe and welcoming law. We believe it is in the best interest of our residents now and even more so in the future.

Thank you for listening to our concerns about this bill and we ask that the committee not recommend the bill favorably.