

Testimony of Emma Green

I oppose HB 2717 on the grounds that it would make Kansans less safe.

This assertion is not coming out of nowhere. It is based on over a year of research as well as personal experience. I am not an undocumented Kansan, but I socialize and work closely with some who are. It's a privilege to know them and an even greater privilege that they have trusted me with this single detail about themselves in the midst of all the much more important content of their characters, their family lives and their dreams.

Some people have a difficult time empathizing with other people either because they are incapable, or they simply do not care about putting any effort into understanding the plight of others. This lack of empathy isn't an admirable trait in a single person, but when it's found in an elected body entrusted to enact policies meant to serve the people, it can have disturbing and dangerous consequences.

Our local law enforcement agencies and governments swear to serve and protect our communities. I expect that if I need help, I can call the police. I expect that if I need a dog tag, I can be assisted at city hall. I expect to feel safe when patronizing local business, and I expect that same sense of security for all my fellow Kansans regardless of their status.

We are gathering the pieces of the lessons that will eventually reveal themselves in Ukraine. From a safe distance, we empathize with those fleeing for their lives and the lives of their children. We can see ourselves doing the same. We are angry for them. We are afraid for them.

But why is it so hard for us to understand that people have been doing this for years? They flee unsafe places; they flee places with no opportunities. They flee as a direct result of the United States' interfering and imperialistic policies, and yet they come to a place that they know will treat them unfairly, that has stacked the deck against them immigrating legally, that has built industries completely reliant on their work, that makes money off their backs while paying them unlivable wages and has the nerve to blame them for it.

They come because of that same hope we all have. Some of us were just handed it on a silver platter while others have to sacrifice everything for the slightest chance.

If the federal government wants to hire people who can sleep at night after they've broken up families and destroyed honest, hardworking people's lives, let them. But we don't need to help them do it.

And if that doesn't trigger any of your empathy, don't add more to local law enforcement's plate. They don't get paid enough to do ICE's bidding.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Emma Green