

**To: Hon. Representative John Barker and Members of the Committee**

**From: Yeni Telles, LMSW**

**Re: Testimony in Opposition to the HB 2717**

**Date: March 14, 2022**

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

**I write to you to urge strong opposition to the HB 2717 attempt to criminalize immigrant communities in the state of Kansas.**

My name is Yeni Telles, I was born in Mexico and migrated to the United States when I was ten. I moved from California to Kansas in 1999 because of the variety of opportunities, Kansas has been my home and helped me grow as a mother of three, but also professionally. While I lived in California my dream of becoming a homeowner and graduate from a university were only dreams, but in Kansas I have been able to fulfill those dreams and more. I have seen the growth of our state and the growth of our immigrant community. Our state is diverse and has welcome many families from diverse background but with one thing in common, willingness to work and willingness to give.

I graduated from Wichita State University with a master degree and social work, and within this profession, I have had the opportunity to work with vulnerable communities. I have served families who overcome challenges including substance use, poverty, mental health, and violence.

The immigrant community has a history of fear towards law enforcement for several reasons and I have worked tirelessly to build a trusted and strong relationship between the immigrant community and law enforcement in Wichita KS.

According to American immigration council, there are about 106,933 people in Kansas, including 54,835 U.S citizens living in mixed status families. HB 2717 will create a negative domino effect in our Kansas families only to oppress the immigrant community.

As a social worker working directly with victims of crime, especially victims of domestic violence, there is already fear within the immigrant community contacting law enforcement to report a crime committed against them. Immigrants are not strangers, they are our neighbors, the family of our children's classmates, our coworkers.

The passage and implementation of bills like HB 2717 will create walls instead of bridges. Laws like this will only create family separation instead of safe communities.

**I, stands in strong opposition to the underlying bill and ask Kansas government to put all its residents' safety and wellbeing first and ignore this attempt to use a divisive bill to create fear, misinform and deny the economic contributions, and cultural richness that immigrants bring to the state.**

I thank the committee for allowing us to testify and should its Hon. Members have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at 316.494.2370

Sincerely,

Yeni Telles, LMSW

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yeni Telles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

3/14/2022