



PO Box 654
Lawrence, KS 66044

kifa@kansasinterfaithaction.org
(913) 232-2336

Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director
Rev. Rachael Pryor, Board Chair

Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber in Opposition to HB2717
Senate Fed and State Committee, Sen. Rob Olson, Chair
March 29, 2022

Good morning. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I'm the executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide issue advocacy organization that represents people of faith and conscience throughout the state.

I want to refer you to the written testimony by Msgr. Stuart Swetland, president of Donnelly College and a KIFA board member. As someone who has been intimately involved with the development of the Safe and Welcoming ordinance in Wyandotte County, and who heads a college with a large immigrant population, his testimony is very important and informative.

But I'll make a couple of additional points:

Everybody understands our immigration system is broken. We all wish the federal government would deal with it but they haven't. That leaves municipalities with large immigrant communities to deal with the problems this causes as best they can.

After a 5 year process WYCO passed safe and welcoming with a huge amount of buy-in from the community, including police and political leadership. It allows people to get municipal IDs and makes sure that those applying are not immediately turned over to ICE. It does not apply to criminal behavior and it does not allow people to vote.

Immigration status is a civil violation, not a criminal one. Many people are in mixed families but our broken immigration system keeps everyone in the family in a shadow area where they are afraid to go to police or access municipal services lest their uncle or father get deported. This opens them up to being exploited or victimized.

Safe and welcoming is the kind of local solution to a local problem that we should hold up as an example - an example of democracy in action. The state should not come in and upset all this careful work.

This bill has been wrongly called a sanctuary cities bill. This is a misnomer. What it really is an anti-immigrant bill. If we need people's labor, if we need their taxes, then we should allow them to be part of the civic life. This bill keeps people in the shadows, for no real benefit to the state. I urge you to vote it down.