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**Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director of Kansas Interfaith Action,
in opposition to SB 157**

Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee—February 15, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee—

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I am Executive Director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social, economic, and climate justice issues. I am appearing today in opposition to SB 157.

The religious community’s support of the rights and dignity of immigrants, no matter their legal status, is well-known, both in Scripture and in the contemporary teachings and policies of the our religious institutions. In Hebrew scripture, we are directed to “love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34). Christian scripture reports that Jesus and his disciples were itinerants. When asked “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan, a foreigner who treated a badly beaten man as the foreigner would have wished to be treated (Luke 10:25-37). The Qur’an teaches doing “good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet” (4:36). Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources call us to recognize the opportunities and challenges of human migration—caring for ourselves and our families, interacting with strangers, valuing diversity, and dealing with immigration systems.¹

The denominations represented in our coalition support comprehensive immigration reform on the national level, and in its absence, prioritize upholding the legal rights and dignity of the immigrant. This includes the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the aforementioned Unitarian Universalist Association, and the United Methodist Church, which in its Book of Discipline says the following:

We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination. We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all.

Obviously the two bills the committee is hearing today are related, and so the issues that come up in one also will come up in the other.

¹ Unitarian Universalist Association, Immigration as a Moral Issue: 2013 Statement of Conscience.

Both bills would mandate that local law enforcement act an arm of immigration authorities. In the case of SB 157, the secretary of state wants the Kansas Highway Patrol, in the course of their regular duties, not only be authorized, but *required* to check the immigration status of those they interact with, and to detain them if their legal status is in question.

In a quite likely scenario, a person who has been resident in the United States for 10 years, with citizen children in the car, could be pulled over by the KHP, their immigrant status questioned, and immediately put into custody. I hope I don't have to tell you how this disruptive this would be to that family, and to the people who depend on them. And I remind you, residing in the United States without documentation remains a misdemeanor—hardly worth the high priority this Secretary places on it.

This bill opens the door to racial profiling and other potential abuses, as well as taking the KHP away from its real mission, of keeping our highways safe. It is reminiscent of Arizona's infamous "papers please" law, most of the provisions of which have been blocked by federal courts—not an uncommon outcome with laws written by the Secretary of State. A settlement last year severely restricted the enforcement of the law, and cost Arizona \$1.4 million in legal fees. It is more than likely that this legislation would result in yet another expensive lawsuit, in which the Kansas taxpayers will pay for the preoccupations of their Secretary of State.

Immigrants are an important part of Kansas' culture and its economy. In the past business and farming interests have opposed bills like SB 157 in the past because of the potential negative economic impact.

For reasons of priorities—this shouldn't be one—and expense, for the wellbeing of Kansas' communities and its economy, for the human dignity of the immigrant in question, and for the directives of our faith traditions to treat the stranger justly, I urge you to vote against SB 157.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to take questions at the appropriate time.