



Date: October 12, 2017
To: Senate Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform
From: Ken Taylor, Executive Director, Kids Forward
(Formerly Wisconsin Council on Children and Families)
Subject: SB 275

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Ken Taylor, Executive Director of Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Kids Forward works to inspire action and promote access to opportunity for every kid, every family, and every community in Wisconsin. We are proudly pro-kid, and have been ever since we were founded in 1881.

I believe that every member of this committee would agree that children do best when they grow up in families that are stable, economically secure, and able to contribute to their communities. I believe that too, which is why I oppose Senate Bill 275. Kids Forward opposes SB 275 because it would make it harder for immigrant families to raise their children in a safe and nurturing environment, and for immigrant workers to contribute to our state's economy.

Immigrant families are an important part of Wisconsin. There are 143,000 children in immigrant families living in the state, in which at least one parent or the children themselves are immigrants. That means that more than 1 out of 10 Wisconsin children live in immigrant families.

The vast majority of children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens (over 90%). Yet many of them have the potential to be harmed by this bill, which increases the threat of families being torn apart and children separated from their parents if their parents are detained or deported. In fact, 28,000 students in our K-12 system have a parent who is undocumented and could be threatened by this legislation.

Children are traumatized when they are separated from their families. There is a great deal of interest in Wisconsin about toxic stress and trauma and how it is best minimized and mitigated. The First Lady, and members of the legislature, have committed significant time and resource to learning about and addressing this challenge. SB 275 will do the opposite of your concerted efforts to decrease trauma; it will increase the trauma experienced by thousands of kids in Wisconsin. SB 275 will also make it harder for immigrant families to protect their children from harm. If this bill passes, undocumented immigrants whose children have been victimized may be afraid to report the crime for fear of involvement with law enforcement. By discouraging crime victims from working with law enforcement, we make everyone in the community less safe.

SB 275 will also make it harder for immigrant workers to contribute to our economy. Undocumented immigrants work, buy goods, and pay taxes in Wisconsin -- \$72 million a year in taxes, in fact. That's

\$36 million a year in sales tax, \$22 million in property tax, and \$13 million in income tax that undocumented workers pay to help keep state and local governments working. Undocumented workers pay a bigger share of their income in taxes than the top 1% of taxpayers. We also know that immigrants make huge contributions to Wisconsin's businesses and farms, particularly our dairy industry. Nationally, farms with immigrant labor produce nearly 80% of the nation's milk.

For Wisconsin to develop the workforce it needs to move forward with a strong economy, we need to make sure that immigrant workers can achieve their full potential and contribute to our economy. Instead, this bill would likely result in immigrant workers, business owners, and homeowners leaving Wisconsin. They would leave behind farm owners who can't hire enough workers, customers who can no longer purchase the supplies or services they used to, and communities that are missing important members.

Wisconsin should be working to keep children with their parents, not splitting them apart based on their immigration status. And Wisconsin should be making sure that our businesses and farms can find enough workers, not sending workers away. For these reasons I ask you to oppose Senate Bill 275.

Thank you.