



222 10th Street
Worthington, MN 56187

March 10, 2025

RE: Writing in Opposition to HF 16

Dear Minnesota House Public Safety Committee:

I was born in Worthington and raised on a small family farm in the southwest corner of Minnesota. I attended Worthington public schools in the 1990s and 2000s as my hometown was growing increasingly diverse. Today, I am an attorney and the owner of Kivu Immigration Law PLLC in Worthington. I am an elected member of the school board of Worthington public schools and a member of the City's Planning and Zoning Commission. I am a mother who is proud to raise a family in Worthington.

Worthington is a community of immigrants. One out of every three people living in Worthington was born outside the United States. The majority of my daughter's classmates in school is an immigrant or child of an immigrant.

Worthington is safe. This is a small town where we can leave doors unlocked and take our kids to any city park without worry for their safety. Our community is safe because of all our community members, not in spite of them. Everyone in this community works hard to raise our kids with good values, treat each other with respect, and cooperate with law enforcement when we need help.

In my experience as an attorney in Worthington, I have seen firsthand that the federal immigration status of an individual has no relation to their likelihood to commit a crime impacting the safety of my community. Simply put, someone's immigration status does not make them any more or less dangerous than anyone else.

However, immigration status **does** often determine whether an individual feels safe reporting criminal activity to law enforcement. Noncitizens are frequently scared that law enforcement will detain and deport them, even when they themselves are victims of a crime. Citizens often fear interactions with law enforcement if they have noncitizen family members or friends who may be questioned or temporarily detained by law enforcement.

There has been a sustained effort over many years by law enforcement in Worthington to develop trust among newly arrived immigrants in our community. This trust-building is hard work, and it is working. This trust keeps us all safe by ensuring that all members of our community cooperate with law enforcement. Central to this trust is the understanding that law enforcement's top priority is public safety.

HF 16 is not a public safety bill – this bill would make my community less safe. Here in Worthington, we know that noncitizens raising families and contributing to our economy does not constitute a public safety risk. Mandating our local law enforcement to prioritize federal immigration policies, however, will destroy a great deal of trust that law enforcement has built in our community over many years of hard work. Many people who would otherwise report criminal activity or assist in an investigation will be scared to interact with law enforcement if HF 16 is passed into law, making us all less safe.

Please let local law enforcement continue to do their job keeping us safe. I urge you to oppose HF 16.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin Schutte Wadzinski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erin Schutte Wadzinski
Attorney