

July 22, 2015

Re: Illinois Organizations Oppose Attempts to Force State and Local Law Enforcement to Participate in Immigration Enforcement

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned 39 Illinois-based organizations, write to express our opposition to any legislation that forces state and local law enforcement agencies to participate in immigration enforcement or share information with federal immigration authorities similar to H.R. 3009, “Enforce the Law for Sanctuary Cities Act,” introduced by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA). As organizations that work with immigrant communities, including survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, we know that many Illinoisans are afraid to dial 911 out of fear that interaction with law enforcement will result in the deportation and separation from loved ones. Further, we know the impact is not limited to immigrants. Since ICE routinely issues detainers without ever interviewing individuals, this has resulted in U.S. citizens being held in police custody when they would have otherwise been released. We are proud of Cook County, Illinois for setting a national example by passing an ordinance to ensure that local law enforcement does not comply with unconstitutional immigration detainers.

Cook County Ordinance Allows Local Law Enforcement to Focus its Limited Resources on Upholding Public Safety

In 2011, the Cook County Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance stipulating that the Cook County Sheriff would not honor immigration detainers issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unless it was accompanied by a criminal warrant or written agreement that the federal government would reimburse the county for all costs incurred by complying with the ICE detainer.¹ The Cook County ordinance is a critical tool to foster trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. As Illinoisans, we know that police participation in immigration enforcement severely hinders the work of local police and diverts personnel and financial resources from local police’s primary job of upholding public safety and addressing real, dangerous crime in our communities. We strongly oppose any efforts that penalize local law enforcement for ensuring that their limited resources are dedicated to the safety of our communities—not federal immigration enforcement.

Forcing State and Local Law Enforcement to Act as Immigration Enforcement Makes Communities Less Safe

The reality of state and local law enforcement agencies across the state acting as immigration enforcement agents has sowed tremendous distrust of law enforcement amongst immigrant communities. A 2013 University of Illinois study found that 44 percent of Latinos surveyed report being less likely to contact the police if they are a victim of a crime out of fear that the police will inquire about their immigration status or people they know.² This is particularly harmful for immigrants trying to escape abusive situations. Because police typically arrest both parties involved in domestic disputes, abused individuals are often flagged for deportation when

¹ Cook County, Illinois, Ordinance 11-O-73 (2011).

² Nik Theodore, *Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement*, University of Illinois at Chicago, May 2013.

police cooperate with immigration enforcement and fail to provide protection to individuals seeking police assistance in abusive situations.³ When state and local police help enforce immigration laws, it prevents everyone, U.S. citizens and immigrants alike, from accessing police protections.

It is critical that everyone in our communities feels safe contacting the police to report crime. We strongly urge you to reject any legislation that penalizes law enforcement agencies who refuse to participate in immigration enforcement or share information with federal immigration authorities. Please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Chan at the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) at jchan@heartlandalliance.org or (312) 660-1363 or Fred Tsao at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) at ftsao@icirr.org or (312) 344-2218 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Apna Ghar, Inc. (Our Home)
Arab American Action Network (AAAN)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Chicago
Asian Health Coalition
Centro Autonomo
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos
Centro Romero
Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform
Chicago Community and Worker's Rights
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
Community Health Partnership of Illinois
C-U Immigration Forum
Enlace Chicago
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
HACES
HIAS Chicago
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Iglesia Bautista Central
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
KAN-WIN
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
Law Offices of Shirley Sadjadi
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
Mexico Solidarity Network
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Lawyers Guild of Chicago
Northern Illinois Justice for our Neighbors (JFON)
Organized Communities Against Deportations
P.A.S.O West Suburban Action Project

³ Lindsey Gill, "Secure Communities: Burdening Local Law Enforcement and Undermining the U Visa," 54 William & Mary Law Review 2055 (2013), <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol54/iss6/7>, pp. 2056.

Polish American Association
Project IRENE
Rape Victim Advocates
SEIU Illinois Council
Sisters of Mercy Chicago Justice Committee
The Hispanic American Community Education and Services
UE Western Region
United African Organization
United Methodist Northern Illinois Conference Office of Mission and Advocacy
University YMCA