

October 15, 2015

Re: Illinois Organizations Oppose S. 2146 – “Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act”

Dear Senator Kirk:

We, the undersigned 50 Illinois-based organizations, write to express our opposition to S.2146, “Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act,” introduced by Sen. David Vitter (R-LA). 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, the impact is not limited to immigrants: since ICE routinely issues detainers without ever interviewing individuals, even some U.S. citizens are being held in police custody when they would have otherwise been released. We are proud of Cook County 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 ICE has a criminal warrant or a 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

State and local law enforcement engagement with immigration enforcement sows distrust of law enforcement among 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 Immigrants trying to escape abusive situations are particularly vulnerable: because police typically arrest both parties involved in domestic disputes, abused individuals are often flagged for deportation when police cooperate with immigration enforcement and fail to provide

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.

protection to individuals seeking police assistance in abusive situations.³ When state and local police help enforce immigration laws, U.S. citizens and immigrants alike are denied 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) 332-7360 x213 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

1. Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE)
2. Apna Ghar, Inc. (Our Home)
3. Arab American Action Network (AAAN)
4. Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Chicago
5. Asian Health Coalition
6. Centro Autonomo
7. Centro de Trabajadores Unidos
8. Centro Romero
9. Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform
10. Chicago Community and Worker's Rights
11. Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
12. Communities United (Formally Known as Albany Park Neighborhood Council)
13. Community Health Partnership of Illinois
14. Covenant World Relief
15. C-U Immigration Forum
16. East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center
17. Enlace Chicago
18. Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
19. Gay Liberation Network
20. HACES
21. Heartland Alliance
22. Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
23. Iglesia Bautista Central
24. Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
25. KAN-WIN
26. Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
27. Latino Policy Forum
28. Law Offices of Shirley Sadjadi
29. Logan Square Neighborhood Association
30. Mexico Solidarity Network

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.

31. Mujeres Latinas en Accion
32. National Immigrant Justice Center
33. National Lawyers Guild of Chicago
34. North Side Family Support Network
35. Northern Illinois Justice for our Neighbors (JFON)
36. Organized Communities Against Deportations
37. P.A.S.O West Suburban Action Project
38. Polish American Association
39. Project IRENE
40. Rape Victim Advocates
41. SEIU Illinois Council
42. SEIU Local 1
43. Sisters of Mercy Chicago Justice Committee
44. Southwest Organizing Project
45. Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project (SSIP)
46. The Hispanic American Community Education and Services
47. UE Western Region
48. United African Organization
49. United Methodist Northern Illinois Conference Office of Mission and Advocacy
50. University YMCA