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POLICE CHIEFS FROM NATION'S MAJOR CITIES OBJECT TO LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS REQUIRING LOCAL POLICE TO ENFORCE FEDERAL IMMIGRATION LAW

WASHINGTON – The SAFE Act, an anti-immigrant bill that could head to the House floor in the coming weeks, would compel law enforcement officers to engage in immigration enforcement activities or risk losing funding. This proposal would also give states and localities the unprecedented authority to pass their own immigration criminal and civil penalties, which local police would be duty bound to enforce. The proposal would also require that civil immigration status information be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database. Below is a statement from the Major Cities Chiefs Association:

“Immigration is a federal policy issue between the United States government and other countries. Any immigration enforcement laws or practices should be nationally based, consistent, and federally funded.”

“Any Congressional measure that would require state and local law enforcement agencies to engage in immigration enforcement is strongly opposed by the Major Cities Chiefs. This proposal would undermine the trust and cooperation between police officers and immigrant communities, which are essential elements of community-oriented policing. Such a measure would result in fear and distrust of local police, damaging our efforts to prevent crime and weakening our ability to apprehend those who prey upon the public. Moreover, it would divert scarce and critical resources away from the core mission of local police – to create safer communities. And the complexity of immigration law, combined with the lack of adequate training and resources, increases the risk of civil liability for local police departments if they were tasked with enforcing immigration law.

“That is why we oppose the SAFE Act. This proposal attempts to force police officers to perform the duties of immigration agents through the threat of sanctions and the withholding of existing funding. This is a misguided approach and will make all of our communities less safe. Instead of diverting resources away from fighting crime, Congress should reaffirm that immigration enforcement is solely a Federal responsibility. “Major Cities Chiefs support Congress’ effort to reform our broken immigration system and urges legislators to pass commonsense reform that makes the federal government, not our states or cities, responsible for this national policy.”