

National Immigration Law Center’s Statement for the Record

**Submitted to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight
“A Hearing with Sanctuary City Mayors”**

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 10:00AM

Dear Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Connolly, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written statement on behalf of the National Immigration Law Center (NILC). We respectfully request that this statement be made part of the record for the March 5, 2025, House Committee on Oversight’s hearing.

Introduction

The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) is a leading advocacy organization dedicated to defending and advancing the rights and opportunities of low-income immigrants and their families. We advocate for laws and policies that allow immigrants and their families to thrive, including access to health care and public assistance programs, education, and workers’ rights.

This hearing, “A Hearing with Sanctuary City Mayors”, allows an opportunity to shed light on the Trump administration’s use of intimidation tactics to force local officials to cooperate with their mass deportation machine. The data is clear. Forcing state and local governments to devote resources to immigration detention and deportation does *not* make communities any safer or decrease crime rates and in fact puts entire communities at risk. On the other hand, policies that welcome and prioritize the care of all are associated with better safety, public health, and economic outcomes for entire communities.

Welcome Policies Further Safety for All

Our communities are stronger, safer, and healthier when we can all safely access the services and care we need without fear. Those services include preventative care, medical treatment and public education – all of which are protected under policies where jurisdictions chose to not prioritize ICE requests over their own residents’ needs. One study in Central Texas found that, for example, more inclusive health policy options that may be included in a welcoming approach can address critical gaps in health outcomes for communities. When immigrants are able to access care without fear, public health outcomes are better.¹ The threat of deportation

¹ Sheyda M. Aboii. Undocumented Immigrants and the Inclusive Health Policies of Sanctuary Cities. *Harvard Public Health Review* 9, 1–10. 2016. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48503139>

not only worsens physical and mental health issues but also discourages people from getting care.² Studies repeatedly show that the threat of immigration enforcement – including deportation – is linked to a significant decline in accessing health care services and public benefits.³

There is no documented link between increased crime and sanctuary or welcoming policies. A 2017 study examined overall violent crime, property crime, and rape rates in U.S. cities from 2000 through 2014 both before and after the implementation of sanctuary policies.⁴ The findings of this study and others show no statistical relationship between an increase in crime rates and the implementation of sanctuary policies.⁵ In fact, the data points in the opposite direction: crime is lower, and economies are stronger in counties with sanctuary policies compared to non-sanctuary counties. Data from a 2017 study found that sanctuary jurisdictions report higher median household income, less poverty, higher employment-to-population ratios, and lower unemployment rates.⁶

Increased Enforcement is Harmful and Costly

Not only is increased immigration enforcement statistically ineffective in reducing crime, but collaboration between local law enforcement and federal agents actually *worsens* public safety, as it erodes the relationship between communities and law enforcement. In a robust 2017 review of the existing literature on the relationship between sanctuary policies and crime, analysts noted that policies marginalizing newcomers breed mistrust of local authorities and erode the public safety policymakers claim to want to protect.⁷ Under the first Trump administration, when 287(g) contracts between ICE and local law enforcement grew by 260%,⁸ organizations providing services to domestic violence survivors reported that victims

² “Mixed-Status Families and Immigrant Families with Children Continued Avoiding Safety Net Programs in 2023,” Urban Institute. August 7, 2024. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/mixed-status-families-and-immigrant-families-children-continued-avoiding>

³ Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young et al. Beyond “Chilling Effects”: Latinx and Asian Immigrants’ Experiences With Enforcement and Barriers to Health Care. *Med Care*. 2023 May 1;61(5):306-313. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36939228/>

⁴ O’Brien, B. G., Collingwood, L., & El-Khatib, S. O. (2019). The Politics of Refuge: Sanctuary Cities, Crime, and Undocumented Immigration. *Urban Affairs Review*, 55(1), 3-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087417704974>

⁵ See Adam R. Schutt. *Sanctuary Cities and Their Respective Effect on Crime Rates*. *Undergraduate Economic Review*: 16(1). 2019. <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/uer/vol16/iss1/20>

⁶ Tom K. Wong, *The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy*. The National Immigration Law Center and the Center for American Progress. January 26, 2017), <https://www.nilc.org/resources/the-effects-of-sanctuary-policies-on-crime-and-the-economy/>

⁷ Daniel E. Martínez, Ricardo Martínez-Schuldt, and Guillermo Cantor. Providing Sanctuary or Fostering Crime? A Review of the Research on “Sanctuary Cities” and Crime. *Sociology Compass*. 2017; <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12547>

⁸ UnidosUS. Beyond the Border: Family Separation in the Trump Era Executive Summary. 2021. https://unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/unidosus_beyondtheborder_executivesummary.pdf

of abuse felt strongly discouraged from seeking help and reporting due to fear of deportation.⁹ During this same time period, law enforcement leaders reported steep drops in reporting of crime among Latinos.¹⁰ Houston reported a 42.8% decrease in reported rapes,¹¹ while Los Angeles experienced a 25% decrease, which then-Police Chief Charlie Beck attributed to deportation fears.¹² The chilling effect of immigration enforcement threatens to subjugate immigrants into a permanent underclass that is unable to get care or help, suffering in silence.

Not only does public safety suffer under increased immigration enforcement, but local communities also face high costs for collaboration. Data shows that working with ICE costs local communities upwards of \$3.28 billion annually.¹³ Sanctuary policies, conversely, can lead to \$101 million in savings for local communities.¹⁴ The economic contributions that immigrants make to the American economy is also a net positive: a 2024 HHS study found a nearly \$124 billion positive fiscal impact of refugees and asylees on the American economy in a 15-year period (2005-2019).¹⁵

Increased enforcement has also been shown to discourage parents from sending their children—including U.S. citizen children—to school, undermining their constitutional right to education and negatively impacting entire school systems – including teachers and staff.¹⁶ One in four children in the U.S. has an immigrant parent.¹⁷

⁹ "The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Opposes S. 2146" October 2015.

<https://www.aila.org/library/national-task-force-end-violence-opposes-s-2146>

¹⁰ "Sanctuary Cities Primer," The Immigration Hub. January 2025. <https://theimmigrationhub.org/article/sanctuary-cities-primer/>

¹¹ Carolina Moreno, Houston Police Announce Decrease In Latinos Reporting Rape, Violent Crimes. HuffPost. April 10, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/houston-police-announces-decrease-in-latinos-reporting-rape-violent-crimes_us_58ebd5fae4b0df7e204455f4

¹² KCAL News, LAPD: Fear Of Deportation Keeping Latinos From Reporting Sex Crimes, March 22, 2017. <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/lapd-fear-of-deportation-keeping-latinos-from-reporting-sex-crimes/>

¹³ Dale T. Manning and Jesse Burkhardt. The local effects of federal law enforcement policies: evidence from sanctuary jurisdictions and crime. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 40(3), 423–438. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12564>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "New HHS Study Finds Nearly \$124 Billion Positive Fiscal Impact of Refugees and Asylees on the American Economy in a 15-Year Period," Department of Health and Human Services. February 2024.

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/02/15/new-hhs-study-finds-nearly-124-billion-positive-fiscal-impact-refugees-and-asylees-on-american-economy-15-year-period.html>

¹⁶ Patricia Gándara, Lucrecia Santibañez, Jongyeon Ee, and Julieta Rico, The Impact of a Broken Immigration System on U.S. Students and Schools. *UCLA: The Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles*. 2023.

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2rq7q7hh>

¹⁷ Drishti Pillai, Akash Pillai, Samantha Artiga. "Children of Immigrants: Key Facts on Health Coverage and Care," Kaiser Family Foundation. January 15, 2025. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/children-of-immigrants-key-facts-on-health-coverage-and-care/>

Punishing Welcoming Cities is a Political Power Grab

The Trump administration is threatening to revoke federal funding for cities and localities that limit local officials' role in federal immigration enforcement – a coercive tactic to get local Mayors to cede their power and bend to his violent nativist vision. We've already seen the Trump administration attempt to expand the authority of the Executive through illegal and unconstitutional means, including an outrageous attempt to unilaterally rewrite the 14th Amendment. State and local policies that welcome immigrant neighbors are legal, sound, and protected by the 10th Amendment. Any attempt to threaten or intimidate local elected officials into following coercive orders from the Oval Office is an attack on local power. Defending the policies that welcome and protect all members of our community is critical to combatting authoritarian creep and anti-Constitutional overreach.

The No Bailouts for Sanctuary Cities Act is merely one step in the larger plot that the Trump Administration is leading, with Elon Musk at its helm. Their sinister scheme involves cutting federal funding to critical life-saving programs in order to fuel the mass deportation machine and line the pockets of private prison executives. Just like the chaos caused by his OMB's memo that sought to freeze federal funding, the No Bailouts for Sanctuary Cities Act would plunge cities and states into utter chaos, leaving individuals and families without access to school lunches, emergency Medicaid, and food assistance programs.¹⁸ The budget resolution that recently passed in the Senate similarly reflects this strategy to upend the economy in order to jail and target immigrants – regardless of the disarray and panic that millions of families will feel. This draconian vision of a mass detention and deportation regime will fall on the backs of families and local communities everywhere – immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

Conclusion

Equating immigration status with criminality is wrong, both ethically and statistically. Yet, that is exactly the premise that this hearing is built upon. Combining a willful misunderstanding of “sanctuary” policies and the weaponization of Congressional hearings as an intimidation tactic will have devastating impacts on local communities across the country.

While immigrants have been in their crosshairs for years, this hearing and the forthcoming legislation are rooted in President Trump's desire to steer this country further and further into authoritarianism. Coercion over our city and state officials is a hallmark of fascism. We urge Members of Congress to see through the political power grab that is driving this hearing and H.R. 32, and to stand up for our communities and local laws.

¹⁸ Ben D'Avanzo. "This Bill Would Slash City and State Funding for Not Facilitating Mass Deportations," National Immigration Law Center. January 23, 2025. <https://www.nilc.org/articles/this-bill-would-slash-city-and-state-funding-for-not-facilitating-mass-deportations/>

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

Isobel Mohyeddin, Policy Associate
National Immigration Law Center