



Statement of the Alliance for Immigrant Survivors
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
" A Hearing with Sanctuary City Governors"
June 12, 2025

The Alliance for Immigrant Survivors (AIS) is a national network dedicated to defending the rights of immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other gender-based abuse. Given the focus of our work, we urge Congress to support sanctuary policies that protect immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. These policies enhance community safety, foster trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities, and ensure survivors can seek help without fear of deportation. We respectfully request that this statement be entered into the record and that the Committee stand with survivors by supporting policies that keep all communities safe.

Advocates routinely report that immigrant survivors are afraid to report domestic violence to the police. Many worry about leaving their homes, even for therapy sessions or going to their place of worship.¹ Abusers and traffickers often use immigration status and the threat of deportation as a tool of power and control to silence survivors. For this reason, there is deeply-held and justified fear of deportation that keeps immigrant survivors from coming forward to report abuse.² Increased collaboration between state and local authorities and immigration enforcement magnifies that fear. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently announced that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has signed 649 Memorandums of Agreement (MOUs) for 287(g) programs, covering 40 states.³ 514 of those MOUs - 79% - have been signed just this year. 61% of the new MOUs (314) are for "Task Force Models" - the most extensive version of the program.⁴ This model grants state and local law enforcement the ability to exercise certain immigration authority while performing routine police duties.⁵ In these jurisdictions, the line between law enforcement and immigration enforcement becomes increasingly blurred. For immigrant survivors, this raises a critical question: if an officer arrives at their door, are they there to offer protection or to conduct an immigration enforcement action? As the former Police Chief of Montgomery County, Maryland, J. Thomas Manger correctly noted, "Ensuring public safety means ensuring all community members feel safe reporting crimes, regardless of immigration status.

¹ Katelyn Vue. "Immigrant victims of domestic violence face new hurdles, Minnesota Advocates Say" Sahan Journal (April 17, 2025), available at: <https://sahanjournal.com/immigration/immigrant-domestic-violence-victims-hurdles/>

² *Id.*

³ Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act" (last updated June 10, 2025), available at <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g>. A list of current 287(g) participating agencies is available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/287g/participatingAgencies06062025am.xlsx>

⁴ Immigrant Legal Resource Center. "What to Understand About the 287(g) Program" (March 28, 2025), available at <https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources/what-understand-about-287g-program>

⁵ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Enforcement and Removal Operations. "ERO Facts: 287(g) Task Force Model", available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/287g/factsheetTFM.pdf>

Imposing the responsibilities of federal immigration authorities onto local officers only makes that harder.”⁶

Other law enforcement officers have voiced similar concerns about the chilling effect of involving local police with immigration enforcement.⁷ For example, Chris Magnus, a former commissioner of Customs and Border Patrol, has stated, “If undocumented people are afraid to engage with local police officers, they won’t come forward as witnesses — even when they are victims. This means criminals who endanger all residents are less likely to be apprehended and successfully prosecuted.”⁸ City and law enforcement officials have stressed that jurisdictions seeking to build trust with immigrant communities “should not be punished because this is essential to reducing crime and helping victims...[Cities] must continue to protect the safety of all of our residents while ensuring that local law enforcement is focused on community policing.”⁹

State and local officials are best positioned to determine the needs of their communities. Many jurisdictions maintain “sanctuary” policies to ensure they can leverage limited resources where they are needed most. Sanctuary policies do not prevent immigration enforcement, but rather place limits on certain types of cooperation with federal immigration authorities.¹⁰ These limits recognize that local and state government agencies may have limited funding, resources or training to take on duties that expand their role to federal immigration enforcement.¹¹ As the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force has noted, “immigration enforcement is primarily a federal responsibility, and efforts to compel state and local law enforcement leaders to carry out significant immigration enforcement functions divert limited resources from public safety and threaten to undermine trust within immigrant communities.”¹²

Studies show that the entanglement of local and state law enforcement authorities and immigration enforcement authorities in Section 287(g) agreements are ineffective as a tool to reduce crime.¹³ Instead, these agreements result in increased racial profiling and civil rights violations.¹⁴ Such measures undermine decades of law enforcement efforts to build relationships

⁶ National Immigration Forum. “Press Release: Law Enforcement Leaders Address ‘Sanctuary’ Policies” (February 4, 2020), available at <https://immigrationforum.org/article/law-enforcement-leaders-address-sanctuary-policies/>

⁷ See *Id.*

⁸ Chris Magnus. “How Undocumented Immigrants Helped My Police Work” Washington Post (February 3, 2025), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/02/03/immigrant-illegal-ice-trump-church-school-letters/>

⁹ Joint Statement by the U.S. Conference of Mayors CEO and the Major Cities Chiefs Associations “U.S. Mayors, Police Chiefs Concerned With Sanctuary Cities Executive Order” available at <https://www.usmayors.org/2017/01/25/u-s-mayors-police-chiefs-concerned-with-sanctuary-cities-executive-order/>

¹⁰ American Immigration Council. “Fact Sheet-Sanctuary Policies: An Overview” (February 21, 2025), available at <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/sanctuary-policies-overview>

¹¹ Testimony of Tom Manger, Chief of Police, President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association on behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs Association and Montgomery County Police Department before the Senate Judiciary Committee” (July 21, 2015), available at <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/07-21-15%20Manger%20Testimony.pdf>

¹² Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force. “Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force Letter on H.R. 5717” (September 19, 2024), available at <https://leitf.org/2024/09/law-enforcement-immigration-task-force-letter-on-h-r-5717/>

¹³ Joel A. Capellan & Evan T. Sorg, Do Local-Federal Immigration Enforcement Agreements Reduce Crime? A Nationwide Evaluation Of The Crime Reduction Benefits of Section 287(g) of the United States Immigration and Nationality Act (November 2022), available at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/305488.pdf>

¹⁴ See *Id.*; See also ACLU, License to Abuse: How ICE’s 287(g) Program Empowers Racist Sheriffs and Civil Rights Violations (April 2022), available at: <https://www.aclu.org/report/license-abuse-how-ices-287g-program-empowers-racist-sheriffs>.

and trust with immigrant communities, and exacerbate survivors' and witnesses' fears that calling or cooperating with the police may result in their removal, detention, and separation from their families.

Alternatively, the evidence is clear that sanctuary policies actually help enhance community safety. Multiple studies have found that limits on ICE cooperation do not lead to higher crime rates – in fact, sanctuary cities are shown to be safer.¹⁵ A 2017 study showed that on average, counties that did not comply with ICE requests experienced 35.5 fewer crimes per 10,000 people than those that did.¹⁶ They also found that “counties that did not comply with detainer requests had higher household incomes, lower rates of unemployment, lower rates of poverty, and were less likely to have children under 18 in households receiving public benefits.”¹⁷ As our partners have affirmed, welcoming city ordinances provide “peace of mind to our diverse immigrant communities that if they need help in an emergency or are a victim of a crime, they can call for help without fear of deportation.”¹⁸

Twenty-five years ago, Congress established protections for immigrant survivors in the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 with overwhelming bipartisan support: The T visa to assist victims of human trafficking, and the U visa to assist noncitizen victims of certain qualifying crimes (including domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking) who are willing to assist in the investigation or prosecution of those crimes. In creating these protections for immigrant victims, Congress recognized the importance of fostering cooperation between undocumented victims and law enforcement or other agencies tasked with investigating crimes.¹⁹ The goal was to “strengthen the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect, investigate, and prosecute” certain serious crimes “while offering protection to victims of such offenses and keeping with the humanitarian interests of the United States.”²⁰ These protections play a critical role in helping immigrant survivors find independence, safety, and stability for themselves and their children. However, they can only succeed if survivors feel safe coming forward. Without the ability to trust local law enforcement, crimes go unreported, witnesses remain silent, perpetrators go unpunished – and entire communities suffer.

¹⁵ “Testimony of David J. Bier, Director of Immigration Studies at the Cato Institute before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for the Hearing with the Sanctuary City Mayors” (March 5, 2025), available at <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Bier-Written-Testimony.pdf>

¹⁶ Gene Demby “Why Sanctuary Cities are Safe” NPR (January 29, 2017), available at <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/01/29/512002076/why-sanctuary-cities-are-safer> (citing Tom Wong “The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on crime and the Economy” Center for American Progress (January 26, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-effects-of-sanctuary-policies-on-crime-and-the-economy/>)

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ National Immigrant Justice Center. “Statement for the Record House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform March 5, 2025: “A Hearing with Sanctuary City Mayors” available at https://immigrantjustice.org/sites/default/files/content-type/commentary-item/documents/2025-03/NIJC-statement_House-Oversight-hearing_sanctuary-mayors_2025-03-05.pdf

¹⁹ See §1513(a)(2)(A), Public Law No: 106-386, 114 Stat. 1464. Congress found that “providing battered immigrant women and children . . . with protection against deportation . . . frees them to cooperate with law enforcement and prosecutors in criminal cases brought against their abusers.”

²⁰ *See Id.*

We call on all of Congress to recognize that sanctuary policies are a crucial tool for community safety. Supporting sanctuary policies is not only a matter of effective public policy - it is a commitment to justice, safety, and the dignity of all survivors.

Contact: Cecelia Friedman Levin, Advocacy Coordinator, info@immigrantsurvivors.org