

## **National Immigration Law Center's Statement for the Record**

### **Submitted to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform "A Hearing with Sanctuary State Governors"**

**Thursday, June 12, 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 June 12, 2025, House Committee on Oversight's hearing titled, "A Hearing with Sanctuary State Governors".

### **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, much like its predecessor "A Hearing with Sanctuary City Mayors" held on March 5, 2025, is merely another attempt to drive a racist and false narrative about elected officials that put the safety and wellbeing of their constituents over an authoritarian ideology that demands total control. States like New York, Illinois, and Minnesota are stronger because of their immigrant residents and the enacted policies, passed by their democratically elected officials, that protect them. States that refuse to entangle their law enforcement with federal immigration responsibilities are healthier, more prosperous, and safer because they welcome all. Attempts to coerce states into doing otherwise are undemocratic and inappropriate federal intrusions. The Trump administration's vision of mass deportations erodes democracy and seeks to cause fear and chaos. We strongly support states that, now more than ever, understand that their resources are better spent on any other investment in their communities.

### **The Data Proves It: Welcoming Policies Benefit Us All**

Immigrants are valued members of all communities beyond their financial and workforce contributions, but the data is clear that defending their existence is far more economically advantageous than allowing local resources to be diverted on the whims of federal immigration priorities. A 2017 report from the National Immigration Law Center, Center for American Progress, and Professor Tom Wong found that across the board, jurisdictions with sanctuary policies were economically more prosperous than those without welcoming policies<sup>1</sup>. The report found that the poverty rate is 2.3 percent lower, on average, in sanctuary counties compared to

non-sanctuary counties. It also determined that unemployment is, on average, 1.1 percent lower in sanctuary counties compared to non-sanctuary counties, and that the median household annual income is, on average, \$4,353 higher in sanctuary counties compared to non-sanctuary counties<sup>2</sup>.

According to the American Immigration Council, immigrants account for 22.8 percent of New York State's population and 27.4 percent of its labor force, supporting the entire state's economy in many ways<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, they estimate that immigrants make up 17.6 percent of Illinois's labor force, including 25.3 percent of entrepreneurs, 24.6 percent of STEM workers, and 18.7 percent of nurses in the state<sup>4</sup>. The third state implicated in this hearing is Minnesota, where immigrants make up 10.8% of the state's labor force<sup>5</sup>. These states wisely understand that the Trump administration's mass chaotic deportations and disappearances undermine their communities, businesses, and economies. From a pure fiscal sense, they should want as little to do with the masked agents terrorizing their residents as possible.

### **Communities are safer when law enforcement focuses on safety, not fear.**

Despite outrageous claims and attempts at fear-mongering, the truth is that there is no documented link between increased crime and sanctuary or welcoming policies. On the contrary, forcing state and local agencies to enforce immigration laws erodes community trust, instills fear of the police, and leads to fewer reported crimes and reduced cooperation with law enforcement<sup>6</sup>.

There are, on average, 35.5 fewer crimes committed per 10,000 people in sanctuary counties compared to non-sanctuary counties<sup>7</sup>. The threat of deportation deters individuals from reporting

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<sup>1</sup> 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/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Immigrants in New York*, American Immigration Council. <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/new-york/>

<sup>4</sup> *Immigrants in Illinois*, American Immigration Council. <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/illinois>

<sup>5</sup> *Immigrants in Minnesota*, American Immigration Council. <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/minnesota/>

<sup>6</sup> Marty Schladen, "State immigration laws will harm local law enforcement, police say". Ohio Capital Journal. November 25, 2024. <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/11/25/state-immigration-laws-will-harm-local-law-enforcement-police-say/>

<sup>7</sup> 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/>

when they are victims of a crime. An analysis of the Secure Communities policy, a program that expanded enforcement priorities of local law enforcement to include federal immigration enforcement noted *increased* crime, while crime reporting rates *decreased*<sup>8</sup>. Scholars from the University of Arizona, University of North Carolina, and the American Immigration Council found that policies marginalizing newcomers breed mistrust of local authorities and erode the public safety that policy-makers claim to want to protect<sup>9</sup>.

### **Increased Enforcement Harms Communities**

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 and reinforced under policies where jurisdictions chose to not prioritize ICE’s agenda over their own residents’ needs. With the Trump administration’s elimination of the Department of Homeland Security’s Protected Areas’s policy, residents must fear that dropping their child off at school, going to church, or getting an annual checkup could end with them deported without due process, never to see their family again.

According to a recent KFF study, immigrants are now avoiding seeking medical care due to enforcement-related fears, including one in ten lawfully present immigrants<sup>10</sup>. One California health center serving underserved reported a 30 percent increase in no-shows for pediatric appointments<sup>11</sup>. When welcoming policies ensure that we all feel safe getting the critical care we need, entire communities are better off.

Despite the Constitutionally protected right to a public education regardless of immigration status, many children are suffering academic impacts from the enforcement chilling effect. A new AP report found that data from 15 districts across eight additional states, including Texas, Alabama, Colorado, and Massachusetts, showed a decline in school attendance after Trump was

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<sup>8</sup> Gonçalves, Felipe, Elisa Jácome, and Emily Weisburst. 2023. "Community Engagement and Public Safety: Evidence from Crime Enforcement Targeting Immigrants." (*Revise and Resubmit, American Economic Review*). NBER [Link](#); Most Recent Version - [Paper](#) [Previously Titled: "Immigration Enforcement and Public Safety"]

<sup>9</sup> 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>

<sup>10</sup> Shannon Schumacher, Isabelle Valdes, Liz Hamel, et al. *KFF Survey of Immigrants: Views and Experiences in the Early Days of President Trump’s Second Term*. Kaiser Family Foundation. May 8, 2025. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/poll-finding/kff-survey-of-immigrants-views-and-experiences-in-the-early-days-of-president-trumps-second-term/>

<sup>11</sup> Emily Baumgaertner Nunn, Nina Agrawal, and Jessica Silver-Greenberg. “Migrants Are Skipping Medical Care, Fearing ICE, Doctors Say”. *The New York Times*. May 8, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/08/health/migrants-health-care-trump.html>

inaugurated. In Denver, public school attendance in schools primarily serving immigrant students fell by nearly 5% following immigration raids<sup>12</sup>. Schools should be protected as sites to grow and learn, but the threat and real cases of immigration enforcement threaten their role as pillars in our communities.

### **Conclusion**

We know that mass deportations and increased immigration enforcement make everyone less safe. The Trump administration's recent actions to erode democracy, ranging from calling up the National Guard despite the opposition of the state and city at hand to threatening to suspend habeas corpus to publishing and then retracting a seemingly unvetted list of sanctuary jurisdictions it intends to illegally punish all speak to a trend: in the current environment, any state or local elected leader the seeks to facilitate mass deportations is investing in chaos and lawlessness. The governors testifying today are doing the right thing, and this committee should be investigating the Trump administration, not their states.

Equating immigration status with criminality is flat out wrong. Years of data and studies back this fact up, yet politicians in this committee are hellbent on promoting a narrative based upon long-running racist imagery and ideological falsehoods. This hearing is yet another dangerous weaponization of Congressional hearings, and our nation, communities, and neighbors will suffer from it.

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

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National Immigration Law Center

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<sup>12</sup> Bianca Vázquez Toness, Neal Morton, Ariel Gilreath, et al. "After crossing the border for better schools, some parents are pulling their kids and leaving the US," *The Associated Press*. May 21, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/tps-immigrant-school-attendance-trump-ice-129f75f72952e7798ba9f906b1bd74ef>