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**CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL**

# **Chicago City Council votes against measure to ask voters about 'Sanctuary City' status**

Chicago's 'Sanctuary City,' or 'Welcoming City' ordinance has been in place since 1985

By NBC Chicago Staff • Published December 14, 2023 • Updated on December 14, 2023 at 11:46 am

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Chicago's [City Council](#) has voted against a measure that would have asked voters next year if they believe the city should maintain its statutory status as a "Sanctuary City," or as a "Welcoming City," amid an ongoing migrant crisis.

The council voted 31-16 against the measure during a special meeting Thursday, following weeks of heated debates.

The topic has led to tense exchanges, chaos and protests on the chamber floor and accusations of misconduct in recent weeks.

## Should Chicago remain a "Sanctuary City?"

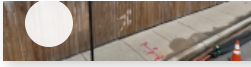
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Several members of the City Council had called for a referendum to be placed on the March ballot to determine whether Chicago should remain a "sanctuary city," a status that has been in place since 1985.

At issue is how to continue financing shelter and other essentials for more than 20,000 migrants that have arrived in the city in the last 14 months.

"I think it's absolutely imperative we give voters the opportunity to have their view on this subject heard, especially when we're talking about spending \$255 million this year alone to take care of 20,000 migrants," Lopez said.

The latest vote comes just after plans to build a migrant base camp in Brighton Park [were scrapped by the state](#) due to environmental concerns, leaving officials to come up with new plans in a race against time amid cold winter weather.

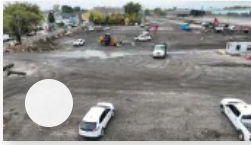


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## What does Chicago's "Sanctuary City" ordinance say?

Chicago's ordinance as a "Sanctuary City," also known as a "Welcoming City," helps to "ensure undocumented residents are not prosecuted solely due to their immigration status."

The protection grants Chicagoans of all ages in school and at work as they access to City services. The ordinance also says that "Chicago police officers cannot arrest on the basis of immigration status."

The pushback against "sanctuary city" status comes as Chicago mulls how to [house more than 20,000 migrants](#) that [have arrived in Chicago from Texas](#). One idea being batted around is to use the former site of the Museum of Broadcast Communications in River North, with Ald. Brendan Reilly blasting the mayor's office for a lack of transparency on the topic.

Other sites are still being evaluated, with more than 3,300 migrants still awaiting placement in city shelters.

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