



Statement of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance:  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION INTEGRITY, SECURITY, AND ENFORCEMENT  
“Fairfax County, Virginia: The Dangerous Consequences of Sanctuary Policies”  
May 14, 2026

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (“Action Alliance”) respectfully submits this statement on the Dangerous Consequences of Sanctuary Policies to the United States House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement.

For almost four decades, the Action Alliance, Virginia’s sexual and domestic violence coalition, has been Virginia’s leading voice on issues relating to Sexual and Domestic Violence. The Action Alliance operates as a clearinghouse for resources, policy advocacy, and training to end sexual and intimate partner violence. The Action Alliance supports survivors through the Virginia Statewide Hotline, advocates for survivor-centered laws, and provides comprehensive prevention tools to build safer communities. The Action Alliance is also a membership program for the more than seventy local sexual and domestic violence agencies in Virginia. In this capacity, the Action Alliance provides training and support to member agencies.

### **Maintaining Clear Boundaries on Collaboration Between Local Law Enforcement and Federal Immigration Authorities Is Essential to Survivor and Community Safety**

It is critical to survivor safety to maintain clear limits and boundaries on collaboration and information sharing between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. When those boundaries are unclear, many survivors of sexual and domestic violence may avoid contacting police out of fear that seeking help could lead to detention, deportation, or family separation. This not only places survivors at greater risk, but also undermines public safety by allowing more abusers to evade accountability.

For example, a survivor recently called our hotline to report that her husband frequently threatened to call ICE to report her and told her that if she ever left him she would be deported and permanently separated from their three children. Despite extensive physical and psychological abuse, the survivor was afraid to call police or reach out for help, because she feared that doing so may result in her deportation, especially as friends and neighbors relayed to her that they had heard that their local police department was working with ICE.

Indeed, our hotline staff frequently report that immigrant survivors cite fear of immigration authorities as a primary reason they are reluctant to call the police or seek assistance from the courts. Many survivors tell our hotline staff that they worry that any interaction with law enforcement or the legal system could expose them or their family members to detention, deportation, or other immigration consequences. As a result, survivors relate that they choose to remain in dangerous situations rather than risk drawing attention to themselves or their loved ones.

Fear of immigration authorities exists even among survivors with legal status. Immigrant survivors who are present legally have related to us their worry that, despite their status, they could still be detained by immigration agents. This apprehension is valid, especially given the frequent and well-documented reports of citizens and lawful residents being detained by immigration officials. As such, even lawful resident survivors tell us they avoid reaching out to local police, fearing that any engagement with police might render them vulnerable to immigration authorities

A 2025 national survey conducted by the Alliance for Immigrant Survivors found that 50 percent of advocates reported immigrant survivors of domestic violence declined to seek legal protection from their abusers. That same survey also reported that 70.3 percent of advocates reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to their abuser due to fears of detention or deportation.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, a study from 2018, a period of heightened focus on immigration enforcement, conducted by the American Civil Liberties Union found that 82 percent of prosecutors reported that domestic violence cases had become more difficult to pursue because survivors feared encountering immigration enforcement and were therefore reluctant to participate in legal processes.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, abusers frequently exploit survivors' immigration-related fears as a tool of coercion and control. Survivors may be threatened with deportation, separation from their children, detention, or financial ruin if they report abuse or seek protection. When local law enforcement is perceived as closely connected to immigration enforcement, those threats become more credible and more effective.

For survivors of sexual and domestic violence, safety often depends on whether they believe the system will protect them or expose them to additional harm. Policies that limit unnecessary

---

<sup>1</sup>Fear and Silence Report-Alliance for Immigrant Survivors. Alliance for Immigrant Survivors. <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/fear-and-silence-report>

<sup>2</sup> ACLU of San Diego. (2018, May 3). New ACLU Report Shows Fear of Deportation is Deterring Immigrants from Reporting Crimes - ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties. ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties. <https://www.aclu-sdic.org/press-releases/new-aclu-report-shows-fear-deportation-deterring-immigrants-reporting-crimes/>

collaboration and information sharing with immigration enforcement can mean the difference between a survivor reaching out for help or remaining trapped in abuse. Ensuring survivors can safely access help from the legal system protects survivors and strengthens families and communities.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, survivors cannot safely seek help if they fear that doing so could expose them or their families to immigration enforcement. Maintaining clear boundaries between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities helps ensure that survivors feel safe reporting abuse, participating in court proceedings, and accessing critical services. When survivors can seek protection without fear, communities are safer, offenders are more likely to be held accountable, and the legal system is better able to fulfill its purpose.