

Joint Statement for the Record
U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement
June 30, 2026

"Sanctuary Policies: Victims' Perspectives"

Dear Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Jayapal, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The undersigned organizations serve, uplift, and advocate with and on behalf of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other gender-based abuses. We respectfully request that this statement be entered into the record for the above-mentioned hearing.

We acknowledge that this hearing was prompted by unimaginable tragedy. We extend our deepest condolences to Ms. Jessica Gorman, mother of Sheridan Gorman, and Mr. Joe Abraham, father of Katie Abraham, on the loss of their daughters.

Many victims have been failed by the systems that purport to prevent violence and help survivors. When abuse survivors who reach out for help receive inadequate or harmful responses, this increases their risk, causes immense distrust in the institutions designed to protect them, and disempowers victims who come forward.¹ It is our common mission to ensure that **all** victims have a path to safety and justice. They deserve nothing less.

When immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes are too afraid to seek help, the consequences extend far beyond any single household—they ripple across entire communities, placing all women, girls, and survivors at greater risk. Fear of deportation, detention, or family separation creates conditions where abusers can act with impunity, knowing their victims are less likely to report abuse or access support.² This silence does not contain violence; it enables it to escalate. When jurisdictions advance policies that shut immigrant survivors out of protection systems, we lose critical opportunities to identify and intervene with harmdoers early, before patterns of abuse deepen and more people are hurt or worse. Ensuring that all survivors—regardless of immigration status—can safely come forward is a fundamental strategy for preventing violence and strengthening the safety of our communities as a whole.³

¹ Center for Victim Research. "What specific aspects of the criminal justice system have been shown to have an impact on survivors?" available at

<https://victimresearch.org/library/what-part-of-the-criminal-justice-process-has-the-most-impact-on-victims/>

² Moa Short. "My Husband Told the Sheriff to Report Me to ICE" The Cut (October 29, 2025). available at <https://www.thecut.com/article/husband-reported-wife-ice-domestic-violence-deportation-threats.html>; Flores, Y.R., Raut, S., Mengo, C. *et al.* Service Accessibility: Service Providers' Perspectives on Barriers Faced by Immigrant Women of Color Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. *J Fam Viol* (2025). available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-025-00909-x>

³ Human Rights Watch, "We Need U: How the U Visa Builds Trust, Counters Fear, and Promotes Community Safety" available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/12/02/we-need-u/how-the-u-visa-builds-trust-counters-fear-and-promotes-community-safety>

Increased collaboration between state and local authorities and immigration enforcement intensifies fear of deportation. As of June 26, 2026, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has signed 2,033 Memorandums of Agreement for 287(g) programs covering 39 states and two U.S. territories.⁴ Of those, 1,344 (just over 66%) represent “Task Force Models” in which state and local law enforcement may “identify and report suspected aliens *not charged with crimes*”⁵ and permit officers to enforce immigration laws while performing routine police duties.⁶

The Baldwin Sheriff’s Office in Alabama employed this Task Force Model when they arrested and detained Wendy Hernandez Reyes, a single mother who is herself a survivor of domestic violence with no criminal record, on her way to work. ICE did not consider that Ms. Hernandez Reyes was a domestic violence survivor, causing her to be detained, deported and separated from her young son, Orlin Hernandez Reyes.⁷ After losing his mother to deportation, Orlin was left in the care of an abusive family member and was brutally murdered. His death is a tragic reminder that policy decisions do not occur in a vacuum; they profoundly impact the safety and survival of children and families.

The experiences of Wendy Hernandez Reyes and the Gorman and Abraham families arise in different contexts and some may try to frame them as being on opposing sides of the 287(g) debate. Yet, at a fundamental level, these stories involve profound loss. No parent should have to suffer the loss of a child, and no parent should have their grief publicly amplified by systems that have failed them while being offered no real justice, accountability or any solutions that could have made the difference for them and their families. Immigration enforcement policy must move beyond an overbroad, destructive policy and focus on the due process, dignity, and safety of families and communities.

In practice, overbroad immigration enforcement policy means that survivors are not only vulnerable in their homes, but also fearful outside the home while walking a child to school,⁸

⁴ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act,” available at <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g> (last accessed June 29, 2026). See also Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “287(g) Participating Agencies,” available at (last accessed June 29, 2026).

⁵ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act,” available at <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g> (last accessed May 15, 2025) [Emphasis added].

⁶ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “287(g) Brochure” available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/287g/287gBrochure.pdf>

⁷ Maria Sacchetti, “She was deported without her toddler. Then ICE blamed her for his killing,” Washington Post (May 16, 2026), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/05/16/she-was-deported-without-her-toddler-then-ice-blamed-her-his-murder/?_pml=1

⁸ Madeleine Ngo, “ICE Arrests Disrupt Schools, Prompting Fear Among Families” New York Times (December 17, 2025) available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/17/us/politics/ice-arrests-schools.html>

going to court,⁹ seeking medical care¹⁰, or attending services at their place of worship.¹¹ Across the board, advocates and service providers report that victims were retreating into the shadows, not seeking help from the very services that are supposed to keep all of us safe. As one advocate recently stated,

"In the past, we would always say you need to call [the sheriff's office]. But now we're thinking twice about it, even when it's a crime we would have reported previously. **Because we have seen so many times, the ones to come are harming rather than helping them.**"¹²

A recent poll found that 62% of Americans believe ICE's actions are making Americans less safe.¹³ This concern has been echoed by law enforcement leaders who worry that overbroad immigration enforcement actions are harming public trust.¹⁴ ICE's overbroad immigration enforcement policies means that over 70% of current detainees have no criminal convictions.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ These limits also 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.¹⁷

In our work with survivors, we know that sanctuary or community trust policies aren't obstacles to public safety. They are essential to it.¹⁸ More than 30 years ago, a bipartisan Congress enacted the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and then passed the Victims of

⁹ Marie-Rose Sheinerman. "She Testified About Being Raped. Then ICE Showed Up." The Atlantic (April 6, 2026), available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/04/ice-deportation-domestic-violence-victims/686629/>

¹⁰ KFF. "Key Facts on Health Coverage of Immigrants" (May 19, 2026), available at <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/key-facts-on-health-coverage-of-immigrants/>

¹¹ 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/> ; <https://abc7ny.com/post/nj-leaders-community-concerned-ice-agents-arrest-2-outside-church-union-city/18608621/>

¹² Shoshana Walter. "They Called 911 for Help, Police Sent them to ICE Detention Instead." Marshall Project (May 11, 2026), available at <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2026/05/11/florida-ice-police-arrest> [Emphasis added].

¹³ PBS News. "Poll: Nearly two-thirds of Americans say ICE has gone too far in immigration Crackdown" (February 5, 2026), available at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/poll-nearly-two-thirds-of-americans-say-ice-has-gone-too-far-in-immigration-crackdown>

¹⁴ Shaila Dewan, 'It's All Just Going Down the Toilet': Police Chiefs Fume at ICE Tactics, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/30/us/its-all-just-going-down-the-toilet-police-chiefs-fume-at-ice-tactics.html>

¹⁵ TRAC Immigration."Immigration Detention Facts", available at <https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/>

¹⁶ American Immigration Council. "Fact Sheet-Sanctuary Policies: An Overview" (February 21, 2025), available at <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/sanctuary-policies-overview>

¹⁷ 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>

¹⁸ Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes & Monica Deza, Can Sanctuary Policies Reduce Domestic Violence? IZA Discussion Paper No. 12868 (Dec. 2019),

Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, which created critical pathways to safety and stability for immigrant survivors. These landmark bipartisan measures – like VAWA self-petitions, U and T visas – were designed to prevent abusers from using threats of deportation to control immigrant survivors and to encourage noncitizens to report crimes. Congress recognized that it was vital to ensure that abusers, traffickers, and perpetrators of crime could not weaponize the immigration system to silence victims and avoid accountability. As Congress wrote when it created U and T visas, 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.”¹⁹

Today, survivors with pending and even approved gender-based violence petitions are being detained and placed in adversarial removal proceedings where they have no right to free, court-appointed counsel. Advocates at the local level are continuing to report the devastating effects overbroad enforcement actions on victims. For example,

- According to her lawyer, Malena²⁰ was trafficked to the United States by a man who forced her into domestic and sexual servitude and did not allow her to leave the house for 13 months. She eventually escaped with two children including a breastfeeding baby and applied for a T visa. Malena was arrested in a routine check-in for her T visa and then detained for two months without her children. While three teams of lawyers working together on the case eventually got her released, she emerged traumatized from being detained again in a way that echoed confinement under her abuser, and having lost the breastfeeding relationship with her baby.
- Anna²¹ was arrested after an abusive partner, a US citizen, reported her to police, her lawyer said. She was then transferred to ICE detention where she was separated for three months from her three-month-old baby. Anna experienced extreme stress and mental health deterioration while in ICE detention because she felt helpless to protect her baby in detention. She was not provided with a breast pump in ICE detention and suffered from mastitis. When Anna was finally able to reunite with her baby after her lawyers filed a habeas petition, he did not recognize her. “That was very hard for my client, but it was not surprising as the baby had spent more than half his life without her by the time she was able to see him again.”

Recent litigation has addressed these harms to immigrant survivors. In *ICWC v. Noem* (C.D. Cal May 20, 2026), the court temporarily halted the implementation of the 2025 guidance to ICE officers (which increased the arrests of immigrants with survivor-based claims) and

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 Name changed to protect confidentiality.

²¹ Name changed to protect confidentiality.

restored prior policies regarding employing a victim-centered approach when ICE encounters survivors.²² This is an important step forward, but Congress must do more. Congress must act to strengthen protections so that **survivors with pending VAWA/T/U matters are not deported, in keeping with the promise that created these bipartisan protections in the first place.**

To seriously address survivors' safety, we respectfully urge Congress to:

- 1) Prohibit funding from being used in enforcement actions at or near, **sensitive locations** including courthouses, domestic violence shelters, and medical facilities, which are the very places survivors of crime often seek help.
- 2) **Restore and Strengthen Protections for VAWA, U Visa, and T Visa Applicants.** Congress must ensure that pending VAWA Self-Petitions and U and T visa matters function as true protections from deportation, consistent with original Congressional intent. The recent preliminary injunction in the federal case *ICWC v. Noem* (C.D. Cal May 20, 2026) confirms the sensibility of this approach.²³
- 3) **Address Processing Backlogs.** Congress must fund adequate USCIS staffing and increase the annual cap on U and T visas to ensure survivors can access protection in a timely manner.
- 4) **Restore Distinction between State and Local Police and Immigration Enforcement.** The entanglement of local police with federal immigration enforcement has a documented chilling effect on survivors' willingness to report abuse, hampering local police from protecting communities. Communities must be able to trust local law enforcement without fear that a call for help will trigger deportation. Congress must act to end invasive 287(g) agreements, to protect and preserve the ability of states and localities to maintain community trust policies, and to oppose Executive Orders that withhold federal funding to coerce their elimination.
- 6) **Restore Access to Critical Safety Nets for Survivors.** H.R. 1 eliminated critical safety net benefits like SNAP, the Child Health Insurance Program, and Medicare for lawfully present individuals including immigrant survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking as well as refugees and asylees. Congress must act to restore these critical protections as they are key to helping end cycles of violence.
- 7) **Ensure Safe Access to Community Resources, Healthcare, and Courts.** Immigrants – including those with pending applications for legal status – must be able to safely access hospitals, domestic violence shelters, schools, community organizations, and

²² *Immigration Center for Women and Children v. Noem*, Case No. 2:25-cv-09848-AB-AS, 2026 WL 1455004 (C.D. Cal. May 20, 2026)

²³ *Immigration Center for Women and Children v. Noem*, Case No. 2:25-cv-09848-AB-AS, 2026 WL 1455004 (C.D. Cal. May 20, 2026)

state and federal courthouses. ICE enforcement operations at or near these locations must be prohibited.

8) **Ensure Grant Funding Continues to Support All Survivors.** DOJ should immediately release all delayed congressionally authorized and appropriated grant funding that supports violence prevention and victim services, including services for immigrant survivors. DOJ must not impose funding conditions that contravene the authorizing statutes Congress enacted to protect immigrant survivors.

Respectfully submitted:

Americans for Immigrant Justice
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
ASISTA Immigration Assistance
Esperanza United
Human Rights Watch
Tahirih Justice Center