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Submitted to U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary “Restoring Immigration Enforcement in America” Wednesday, January 22nd, 2025 at 10:00AM

Dear Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Jayapal, and Members of the Subcommittee:
Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written statement on behalf of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC). We respectfully request that this statement be made part of the record for the January 22nd, 2025 House Committee on the Judiciary’s hearing.

Introduction

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) is a national immigrants rights’ organization. The ILRC is dedicated to working with and educating immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to continue to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people. The ILRC provides immigration legal trainings, technical assistance, and educational materials, and engages in advocacy and immigrant civic engagement to advance immigrant rights. The ILRC publishes expert immigration practice manuals used by legal services providers nationwide. We also conduct immigration law training on emerging issues, policy updates, and effective practices. By providing education and leadership development, the ILRC helps immigrant communities and organizations advocate for improved policies, better access to services, and safer communities. ILRC attorneys are experts in the field of immigration law. Through our advocacy work at local, state, and federal levels, we work to ensure that policies and procedures impacting immigrant communities are fair and just.

The cruelty of targeting sanctuary jurisdictions for mass deportations

In light of our commitment to justice for all immigrant communities, we are deeply concerned to hear the administration threatening to cause panic and fear in communities through draconian enforcement tactics and mass deportations of immigrants. The ILRC encourages Members of Congress to stand against this government-sponsored violence against our communities. The demonization and dehumanization of immigrants by the president are an effort to sow fear and division. Mass deportations will make it impossible for our community members to thrive and live with safety and dignity.

This hearing is at a critical moment in time. It is crucial that the members of this committee must not buy into the administration’s premise that immigration enforcement must be harsher or more cruel. The system relies heavily on the flawed and racist criminal legal system to apprehend and deport immigrants who are living in the interior of the United States. The mass deportations that have been announced will begin by targeting sanctuary jurisdictions. These thriving communities are the places that have chosen not to participate in or support immigration enforcement efforts. Sanctuary policies fall squarely in the center of the administration’s target because these communities where immigrants can live safely are

thriving. These communities do not fit the narrative that the administration would like us all to believe - that safety can only be achieved through more oppressive and brutal immigration enforcement tactics. These enforcement operations are designed to be cruel and to sow fear in the communities where they take place. In the wake of these acts of violence, families will be separated and communities will be devastated.

The state criminal legal system drives interior immigration enforcement

The administration has announced that the mass deportation effort will require the use of state and local law enforcement and the military to engage in arrest, detention and deportation of immigrants. Although immigration law is federal, and immigration enforcement is part of the mission of the Department of Homeland Security, the reality is that our state criminal legal systems are deeply entangled with immigration enforcement. Since the creation and implementation of the 'Secure Communities' program over a decade ago, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) receives automated notifications of every person taken into criminal custody across the country. This notification process is triggered no matter the basis for the arrest. This gives local law enforcement tremendous power to impact immigration enforcement. Over the last decade, 70-75% of ICE arrests in the interior of the U.S. have been transferred from a jail or a federal prison. State law enforcement officers and criminal legal system actors already fuel the mass detention and deportation system. Under the president's cruel policies the connection between criminal legal system contact and detention and deportation will be further cemented.

The president has issued a slew of executive orders directing the agencies to target all unauthorized immigrants with a particular focus on immigrants who have had contact with the criminal legal system, no matter how minimal. The president is well aware that the majority of people sent into the deportation system will continue to be sent there from state and local law enforcement and he plans to exploit that connection to detain and deport unprecedented numbers of people. Many states have rapidly expanded this connection through their own state laws and programs to focus on immigration enforcement such as Operation Lone Star in Texas. In 2024 we saw the proliferation of these anti-immigrant policies across the United States. These states will use this President's mandate and their own anti-immigrant priorities to justify abusive and racist laws that will funnel many community members into the deportation pipeline.

This hearing is at an urgent moment. It is of vital importance that all Members of this Committee and Congress must stand with communities to oppose the violent and racist mass deportation agenda. Federal elected representatives must work in partnership with local communities to slow the gears of the massive deportation infrastructure.

Recommendations

In light of the looming threat of mass deportations, Members of Congress must stand with immigrant communities by making sure federal tax dollars are used to make communities

stronger, not for turning in our neighbors to ICE. We recommend that Congress implement the following recommendations:

- 1) significantly decrease funding allocated to ICE and CBP for detention and deportation;
- 2) issue restrictions on the ability to reprogram funds allocated to other DHS component agencies for the purposes of interior enforcement raids; and
- 3) protect federal funding supporting jurisdictions with sanctuary policies.

Conclusion

We encourage Congress to take meaningful steps to bar the incoming administration from unleashing their racist mass deportation agenda against communities through oversight and protection of Congressionally appropriated funds. Thank you for your consideration for any questions please contact Policy Attorney & Strategist, Nithya Nathan-Pineau, nnathan-pineau@ilrc.org

Sincerely,

Nithya Nathan-Pineau
Immigrant Legal Resource Center