



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

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For a Hearing on

“The Continuing Tragedy of Sanctuary Laws”

Before the

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Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

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Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Jayapal and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. Ms. Carter and Mr. Varfolomeev, I want to express my deepest sympathies for your loss, and my gratitude for your appearance here today.

My name is Naureen Shah, and I am honored to serve as the director of immigration policy at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

I. The ACLU's History and Nonpartisan Defense of Immigrant Rights

For 106 years the ACLU's mission has been to fight for the guarantees of the Constitution, for all. The ACLU is a nonpartisan organization that works to protect and advance civil rights and civil liberties for all in the United States, recognizing that civil rights and civil liberties violations often start first with the most marginalized and vulnerable. We believe in our Constitution's promise of freedom and equal protection under the law. We cherish our nation's foundational ambition: to create a more perfect union.

We defend the civil liberties of all people, regardless of the color of their skin, the accent with which they speak, their political ideology—including when we vehemently disagree with their aims or messages. When the government has the power to deny legal rights and due process to any one group of people, it puts all of our rights in danger.

The ACLU recognizes that our nation has the authority to control its borders and regulate immigration, and it has the obligation to protect the rights and safety of all Americans. But we have long argued that our government must exercise these authorities and duties in a manner consistent with our Constitution, including due process. Our immigration policies should respect human dignity and honor the basic humanity of all people—all workers, all families, all children—because we all deserve safety, compassion and freedom from unlawful government action.

II. Sanctuary Policies Are a Response to a Broken Immigration System and a Reckless, Dangerous Mass Deportation Spree

Fifteen states and hundreds of municipalities have chosen to enact laws limiting collaboration with federal immigration enforcement agents.¹ These laws, which have passed over decades and increasingly in the last year, are a response to an immigration system that is broken and has failed our nation.

Simply put, in the absence of earned pathways to citizenship for longtime residents, too many of our neighbors are targets for deportation. As the Trump administration's deportation drive grows

¹ "ILRC's Updated State-by-State Immigration Enforcement Map Shows Urgent Need for State Officials to Do More to Protect Immigrant Communities," Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Sept. 8, 2026, <https://www.ilrc.org/about-us/press/ilrc%E2%80%99s-updated-state-state-immigration-enforcement-map-shows-urgent-need-state>.

increasingly indiscriminate, reckless, and dangerous, more states and cities are enacting such laws or strengthening them. Sanctuary laws reflect a choice: Communities are choosing to support families and working people over the violence and cruelty of the mass deportation machine. Sanctuary is about choosing:

- More than 4.5 million American children who would be left behind, vulnerable to exploitation and alone, if their undocumented parents were detained or deported;²
- Millions of older adults and people with disabilities who rely on caretakers—one in four of whom who are immigrants;³
- At least 3 million American workers, who stand to lose jobs due to the mass deportation policies, and millions of workers who have lost hours of work and wages due to enforcement surges;⁴
- Millions of Americans who peacefully protest, observe and document ICE’s abuses—and their First Amendment rights to do so;
- The safety of all of a community’s residents and its local public safety needs.

Sanctuary laws are also about communities choosing to keep local resources for local needs, at a time when the federal government has already taken \$240 billion in taxpayer dollars to grow its deportation machine to a level without parallel in American history, and larger than most countries’ militaries.

Our Broken Immigration System Leaves Millions of Americans-in-Waiting at Risk of Deportation

Many of the problems we discuss today can be traced to our broken immigration system. It has left millions of people who are American in every way but on paper—our neighbors, loved ones, coworkers, caretakers—without a path to legal status, without a way to “get in line.” The fact that millions of people live, work and raise families in this country but cannot do so openly and lawfully is incompatible with the rule of law, as Republicans and Democrats alike have long agreed. That is why numerous presidents, including Republicans, have attempted to pass immigration reform measures including an earned path to citizenship.

Instead of moving to fix our system, the Trump administration has sabotaged it further by attacking immigrants with legal status—in what is the largest de-legalization program in American history:

² Claudia Boyd-Barrett, “A Generation of Kids Suffers as Trump Destabilizes Immigrant Families,” CBS News, Sept. 9, 2026, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-immigration-policies-immigrant-children-health/>.

³ Dulce Gonzalez et al., “How Federal Immigration Policy Changes Could Threaten Older and Disabled People’s Access to Direct Care,” Urban Institute, Sept. 8, 2026, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-federal-immigration-policy-changes-could-threaten-older-and-disabled-peoples-access>.

⁴ See AFL-CIO and ACLU, *Citizenship and the Affordability Agenda*, (forthcoming Sept. 16, 2026); Jake Schwitzer, Aaron Rosenthal, and Aaron Sojourner, “The Impact of Operation Metro Surge on Minnesota’s Leisure and Hospitality Sector,” *NorthStar Policy Action*, June 2, 2026, <https://northstarpolicy.org/leisure-and-hospitality/>.

- Millions of noncitizens who have long lived and worked in our communities are now being stripped of Temporary Protected Status and other legal statuses.
- Our legal system, already backlogged and flawed, has been purposely unraveled by the current administration. Many people who have been here lawfully are now falling out of lawful status, as they wait in vain for applications to be processed and interviews to be re-scheduled. This includes people who are the spouses and parents of U.S. citizens.
- As people lose status, they are losing work authorization—and with it, the ability to support their families, including their U.S. citizen children. Many are losing health insurance, the ability to pay rent, and the ability to pay for groceries.

Americans do not like what they have seen of the mass deportation drive, including under Secretary Markwayne Mullin. A July 2026 Economist/YouGov poll shows a majority of Americans—54 percent—say they have little or no confidence in ICE and 58 percent say ICE has used too much force.⁵

Our Communities Are at the Mercy of a Roving National Deportation Policing Force Made Up of Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement

The Trump administration has no enforcement priorities; its singular priority is to find and deport as many people as possible—regardless of the chaos it brings to a family, workplace, or community.

As a result, our communities—citizens and noncitizens alike—are at the mercy of an increasingly large, roving deportation force made up of more than 50,000 agents from ICE and myriad federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Thousands of law enforcement agents have been diverted from their primary missions—including efforts to counter drugs, human trafficking, and transnational crime—to help ICE meet the White House’s arbitrary deportation quota. Understanding the danger this national deportation force poses to our safety, freedom, and civil liberties is critical to understanding why states and cities are choosing sanctuary.

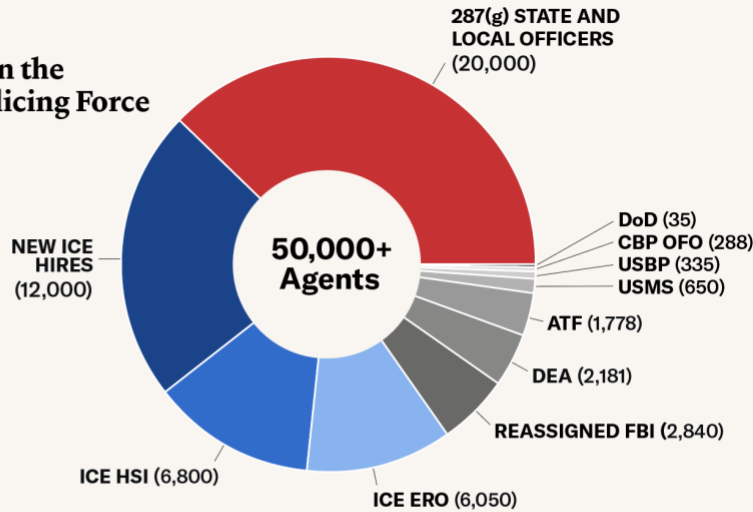
⁵ Alexander Rossell Hayes, “A Majority of Americans Have Little or No Confidence in ICE,” *YouGov*, July 21, 2026, <https://yougov.com/en-us/articles/55212-majority-americans-little-or-no-confidence-ice-immigration-customs-enforcement-july-17-20-2026-economist-yougov-poll>.

CHART 2

Unprecedented Growth in the National Deportation Policing Force

The Trump administration is cannibalizing resources at every level of government, amassing a national deportation policing force of **more than 50,000 agents** — and this force is only growing.

Source: Deputized for Disaster, American Civil Liberties Union, https://assets.aclu.org/live/uploads/2026/02/Deputized-for-Disaster_260227.pdf.



287(g) State and Local Officers (projected)
New ICE Hires
ICE HSI – ICE Homeland Security Investigations
ICE ERO – ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations
Reassigned FBI Agents

DEA – Drug Enforcement Agency
ATF – Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
USMS – U.S. Marshals Service
USBP – U.S. Border Patrol
CBP OFO – CBP Office of Field Operations
DoD – Department of Defense

The Trump administration claims this national deportation policing force is targeting the “worst of the worst.” In reality, its reach has extended to millions of people—citizens and noncitizens—for whom there is no credible link to a public safety threat, as the ACLU detailed in the July 2026 report, *Agents of Chaos and Cruelty*. The report examines immigration enforcement incidents in eight states in 2025—representing a cross-section of the country and reflecting varying degrees of federal law enforcement presence and personnel surges—and found that over 400 of the more than 1,200 immigration enforcement incidents examined involved misconduct by immigration agents.⁶

Though the incidents examined represent a small fraction of total reported enforcement activity in 2025, the pattern across eight states is unmistakable: what happened in Minneapolis, where federal agents killed U.S. citizens Alex Pretti and Renee Good and committed abuses against scores of people, was not confined to that location, surge, or population. It did not start there—and it has not ended. It was part of a pattern of civil rights violations of excessive force, racial profiling, intimidation, and abuse by both federal officials and state and local law enforcement.

⁶ Denise Bell and Naureen Shah, *Agents of Chaos and Cruelty: How the Trump Administration's National Deportation Policing Force Has Attacked American Communities* (ACLU, July 16, 2026), <https://www.aclu.org/publications/agents-of-chaos-and-cruelty-how-the-trump-administrations-national-deportation-policing-force-has-attacked-american-communities>.

Our findings include:

- Immigration agents used force and the threat of force as routine tactics to coerce immediate compliance. We identified 81 occurrences where agents used tactics so dangerous that many law enforcement agencies sharply restrict or prohibit them because they can cut off breathing and bloodflow and become deadly.
- We identified 782 people who were detained, were targeted by agents, or experienced law enforcement misconduct for First Amendment protected activity.
- We identified 214 children who were detained, were targeted for enforcement, or experienced law enforcement misconduct. This includes 32 U.S. citizen children.
- As the Trump administration sought to ramp up immigration arrests, it has changed the nature of American life—turning sites of daily life into danger zones. We documented 624 instances of enforcement in everyday locations such as neighborhood sidewalks and streets, bus stops, gas stations, grocery stores, malls, wildlife reserves, and roads and highways that people take to go about daily life.⁷

Blurring federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies into a single force accountable to a remote executive figure, rather than the local populace, has long been considered anti-American and dangerous to civil liberties. Putting state and local police under the effective command of ICE and Border Patrol agents who are operating in frequent violation of the law—as documented by the ACLU in litigation and found by courts—has recently proven a recipe for civil rights violations, including excessive use of force and illegal detention. For example:

- In May 2025, Florida Highway Patrol and Border Patrol agents stopped a van with three individuals on their way to a landscaping job in Palm Beach County, Florida. One of the occupants, high school senior Kenny Laynez, recorded a video showing the officers dragging the passengers by their necks. Border Patrol and Florida Highway Patrol officers appeared to restrain one of the passengers by the neck in apparent violation of both agencies' policies. One individual was tased, with police claiming, questionably, that he was resisting arrest. Video depicts officers laughing and joking about getting a \$30,000 bonus and one officer saying, "We're going to end up shooting some of them."⁸ When Laynez protested that he was born and raised in the United States and had rights, an officer responded, "You don't have any rights here," and hurried him into a van. He was taken into custody despite his mother, who was also a passenger, reportedly telling officers that he was as U.S. citizen and showing them a picture of his Social Security

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ See Claire Healy, Syra Ortiz-Blanes, and Ana Ceballos, "Tasers and Neck Restraints: A U.S. Citizen Recorded His Arrest by State, Federal Agents," *Miami Herald*, Aug. 13, 2025, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article311554316.html>; Valentina Palm, "He Lived an Immigrant's Nightmare. One Problem: He's a Citizen, Got His Arrest on Video," *USA Today*, July 26, 2025, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/07/26/ice-raids-florida-citizen-immigrant-nightmare-arrested/85328304007/>.

card. State officials claim the stop was made to conduct a “commercial vehicle inspection,” while a federal record says the basis was a “traffic violation.”⁹

- In October 2025, an estimated 200 law enforcement agents from 10 federal, state, and local agencies descended on a racetrack in the farming town of Wilder, Idaho. Federal agents had criminal judicial warrants on gambling charges for just five people, but more than 100 people were arrested for civil immigration violations. Families—including U.S. citizens—were detained and children and adults alike were zip-tied. “Children watched as their parents were taken away without explanation” and “families were separated in a matter of minutes,” local advocates noted.¹⁰

Across communities, but especially in states that require local police to collaborate with ICE through the 287(g) program, the ACLU and our state affiliates continue to receive and document reports of racial profiling and warrantless arrests in violation of federal law—including numerous cases involving citizens. For example, on July 26, 2026, ICE, assisted by the Caldwell County Sheriff’s Office and the U.S. Forest Service, set up a checkpoint at the Wilson Creek recreational area in the Pisgah National Forest, on a narrow road that was reportedly the only way in and out of the creek. Wilson Creek is a popular destination for Latino families to visit, picnic, and swim. Forest Service and Sheriff’s office personnel stopped cars with Latino drivers and occupants, then waved over ICE agents, who swarmed around the vehicles, demanding proof of citizenship or legal permanent resident status. Cars with white drivers were permitted to proceed into the recreational area without inspection. At least 13 people were arrested as part of this operation.¹¹

As the ACLU extensively documented in the report *Deputized for Disaster*, state and local police are increasingly planning traffic stops and checkpoints in collusion with ICE to find people who they believe may be noncitizens.¹² They are blatantly misusing traffic offense laws, staff, and resources for the purpose of feeding immigration enforcement—rather than furthering public safety. The lines of responsibility and accountability for arrests and detention are obscured. As a Texas news outlet put it, 287(g)-enlisted agencies “essentially mix and match their authorities, enforcing federal immigration law in the process of enforcing state criminal and traffic laws.”¹³

⁹ Claire Healy, Syra Ortiz-Blanes, and Ana Ceballos, “Tasers and Neck Restraints: A U.S. Citizen Recorded His Arrest by State, Federal Agents,” *Miami Herald*, Aug. 13, 2025, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article311554316.html>.

¹⁰ Christina Bruce-Bennion and Jess Westhoff, “Idaho Raid Shows Shocking Disregard for Everyone’s Safety — Including Our Children’s,” *Idaho Capital Sun*, Oct. 28, 2025, <https://idahocapitalsun.com/2025/10/28/when-we-should-be-caring-for-all-children-idaho-raid-shows-shocking-disregard-for-everyones-safety/>.

¹¹ Jenae Barnes, “How a Family Swimming Spot at a National Forest Became ‘a Trap’ for an ICE Raid,” *The 19th*, August 10, 2026, <https://19thnews.org/2026/08/ice-immigration-raid-pisgah-national-forest/>.

¹² Naureen Shah, *Deputized for Disaster: How President Trump’s 287(g) Deportation Force is A Powder Keg for our Communities* (ACLU, Feb. 26, 2026), <https://www.aclu.org/publications/deputized-for-disaster>.
Francesca D’Annunzio, “Texas Turns Its Sprawling State Police Force Into Immigration Agents for Trump,” *The Texas Observer*, Nov. 17, 2025, <https://www.texasobserver.org/texas-dps-287g-ice-trump-abbott/>.

According to The Texas Tribune, Texas state police assisted in the immigration arrests of more than 3,000 people across the state in 2025, including by joining “strike teams” in major cities.¹⁴

In Florida, multiple federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies are coordinating massive surges of enforcement in communities, arresting people both on federal immigration charges and for local offenses—and changing the nature of daily life in communities under siege from not just federal agents, but their own law enforcement agencies. For example, a Florida woman described waking up to masked agents, armored vehicles and machine guns during an August 2026 multi-agency surge in southwest Florida.¹⁵ “Families in general, all our immigrant neighbors are scared to death,” a local organizer said. Local observers reported arrests near schools and school bus stops, as local and federal agents fanned out across neighborhoods.¹⁶

III. Police-ICE Collaboration Costs Lives, and Costs Public Safety

When local police collaborate with ICE, it comes with a serious cost to public safety. Below are two illustrative examples.

3-year-old Orlin Reyes

Orlin was a 3-year-old boy, born in the United States to a woman named Wendy Hernandez Reyes. One morning, Wendy left her son with a babysitter and traveled with her sister to the construction site where they worked. Minutes from their arrival at work, they were stopped by a local sheriff’s deputy, who then called ICE on the two women.¹⁷ Wendy wrote a letter to Congress explaining what happened next:

The Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office stopped our truck four minutes before we arrived to the construction site. Officers saw that we had equipment in the back and quickly learned that we spoke Spanish and have foreign identification. Within minutes, my sister and I were handcuffed on the side of the road and turned over to immigration. I told ICE that I was a single mother, that Orlin is just a toddler, that he depended on me. No one cared. We were taken to jail and our four children were left behind. The only person available to care for our children was my sister’s former partner, a man she left because of domestic

¹⁴ Serrano, Alejandro, “‘Operation Lone Star 2.0’: DPS Arresting Thousands of Undocumented Immigrants across Texas to Aid Trump’s Mass Deportation.” *The Texas Tribune*, Sept. 12, 2025.

¹⁵ Dave Elias, “ICE Raids Sweep Gulf Coast Neighborhoods, Detaining Dozens,” *Gulf Coast News*, Aug. 26, 2026, <https://www.gulfcoastnewsnow.com/article/ice-raid-arrest-detain-southwest-florida-lee/73535592>.

¹⁶ Damien Alvarado, “Southwest Florida Groups Help Families Navigate Impact of Immigration Arrests,” *WINK News*, Aug. 29, 2026, https://www.winknews.com/news/southwest_florida/southwest-florida-groups-help-families-navigate-impact-of-immigration-arrests/article_0b50ead5-53ac-45e1-bd2b-d5197cc53622.html.

¹⁷ Maria Sacchetti, “She Was Deported Without Her Toddler. Then ICE Blamed Her for His Killing.” *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/05/16/she-was-deported-without-her-toddler-then-ice-blamed-her-his-murder/>.

violence. From detention I begged ICE for help. I used the tablet at the detention center to send ICE text messages. I told them I wanted Orlin to come with me if I was deported and asked ICE to give me a copy of my passport, so I could request Orlin's U.S. passport. ICE did not respond.¹⁸

Wendy was deported without her son and continued to fight to get his passport. The day she received it—just hours later—she learned her son was dead. Wendy wrote:

The police say Orlin suffered terrible abuse. He had broken ribs, burns, blunt force injuries, and signs of sexual assault. My son was my whole world. He was my light. I was his protector. I will miss him for the rest of my life.¹⁹

In an ICE press release, former ICE Director Todd Lyons stated that Orlin “died when his mother abandoned him,” and “chose to leave [him] with a violent murderer.”²⁰ In reality, Wendy did not abandon her son. She begged to keep him with her. She pleaded with officers not to take her into custody and repeatedly asked ICE for help so she could bring Orlin with her.

We can't bring Orlin back, but we can share what happened to him. His life is a reminder of the beauty, the humanity, and the vulnerability of children who are left behind when local police serve ICE's agenda, instead of public safety.

Nurul Amin Shah Alam

Mr. Alam was a 56-year-old man and a legal refugee from Myanmar. He was reportedly nearly blind, unable to read or write, used a cane for walking, and could not communicate without an interpreter. He died in February 2026 after local law enforcement honored a detainer and contacted Border Patrol. After Border Patrol had determined he was not deportable, on a cold night, agents dropped him outside a Tim Horton's donut shop with only its drive-through open. He had no cell phone, no identification, and was five miles from his home. Border Patrol never informed his family or lawyer. He had been missing for five days when his body was discovered; his official cause of death was complications of a perforated ulcer, precipitated by hypothermia and dehydration. The medical examiner labeled it a “homicide.”²¹

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, which represented Mr. Alam, issued a statement saying:

Mr. Alam was extremely vulnerable. He spoke almost no English and could not communicate without the aid of an interpreter. He suffered from severely impaired vision and had other health issues ... Once Mr. Alam was in federal custody, he should have

¹⁸ Letter from Wendy Hernandez Reyes (on file with the ACLU).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “ICE lodges immigration detainer against criminal illegal alien who allegedly abused and violently murdered 3-year-old nephew,” Mar. 11, 2026, <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-lodges-immigration-detainer-against-criminal-illegal-alien-who-allegedly-abused>.

²¹ Dan Barry and Brendan Bannon, “Where Was Nurul Amin Shah Alam?,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/12/nyregion/buffalo-refugee-nurul-amin.html>.

been protected and respected, not turned out of a federal law enforcement vehicle into the uncertain winter night. Legal Aid stands for the principle that every person, including Mr. Alam, deserves basic human dignity, protection and safety. Legal Aid worked for more than a year to make certain Mr. Alam, who had legal refugee status to be in America, received the same protection under the law anyone in our country should expect. In the end, had Mr. Alam been afforded basic humane treatment, this tragedy could have been avoided.²²

The Public Safety Cost of Diverting Local Resources to ICE

Some law enforcement leaders believe that by assisting ICE they are helping to combat human trafficking and drugs in their communities.²³ In reality, the Trump administration's deportation drive comes at the cost a major diversion of law enforcement resources at the state, local, and federal levels. Across the nation, joint task forces focused on child trafficking and the flow of fentanyl have been disbanded, child exploitation investigations and cases have been suspended or canceled, and federal agents normally focused on combating human smuggling and sex trafficking have been diverted to immigration enforcement.²⁴ As former ICE Chief of Staff Jason Houser put it: "When the FBI, DEA, ATF are all doing checkpoints in [Chicago's] Little Italy tomorrow, the human trafficking, the sex trafficking, the Jeffrey Epsteins, the fentanyl traffickers — they don't quit."²⁵

There are now more than 2,084 state and local law enforcement agencies participating in the 287(g) program, including 907 sheriffs covering counties home to 36 percent of the U.S.

²² "An Important Statement Regarding the Case of Mr. Nurul Amin Shah Alam," Legal Aid Bureau, n.d., <https://legalaidthbuffalo.org/an-important-statement-regarding-the-case-of-mr-nurul-amin-shah-alam/>.

²³ See, e.g., Ivy Secrest Wyoming Tribune Eagle, "'Not a Sanctuary State': ICE Inducts 25 LCSO Deputies to Enforce Immigration," *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, Oct. 1, 2025, https://www.wyomingnews.com/news/local_news/not-a-sanctuary-state-ice-inducts-25-lcso-deputies-to-enforce-immigration/article_f7784b99-4eba-486f-bb4f-9fc1055849be.html ("According to Kozak, the 287(g) certification will allow deputies to assist victims in pursuing certain visas, though visas are not a part of the 287(g) agreement"); Charlie Drape, "Mississippi Law Enforcement Deepens Ties With ICE Under Trump's Revived Immigration Program," *The Clarion-Ledger*, Nov. 14, 2025, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2025/11/14/mississippi-law-enforcement-joins-us-immigration-and-customs-enforcement-ice-program/87210239007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epiti=z114942p000350c000350d00---v114942d--49--b--49--&gca-ft=189&gca-ds=sophi> ("Attorney General Lynn Fitch said the partnership was intended to help identify 'criminal aliens' and strengthen efforts against human trafficking and identity fraud"); Ruthann Campbell, "Florida Sheriffs Association Announces 287(g) Compliance in All County Jails," *Florida Sheriffs Association*, Feb. 24, 2025, <https://flsheriffs.org/blog/entry/florida-sheriffs-association-announces-287g-compliance-in-all-county-jails/>.

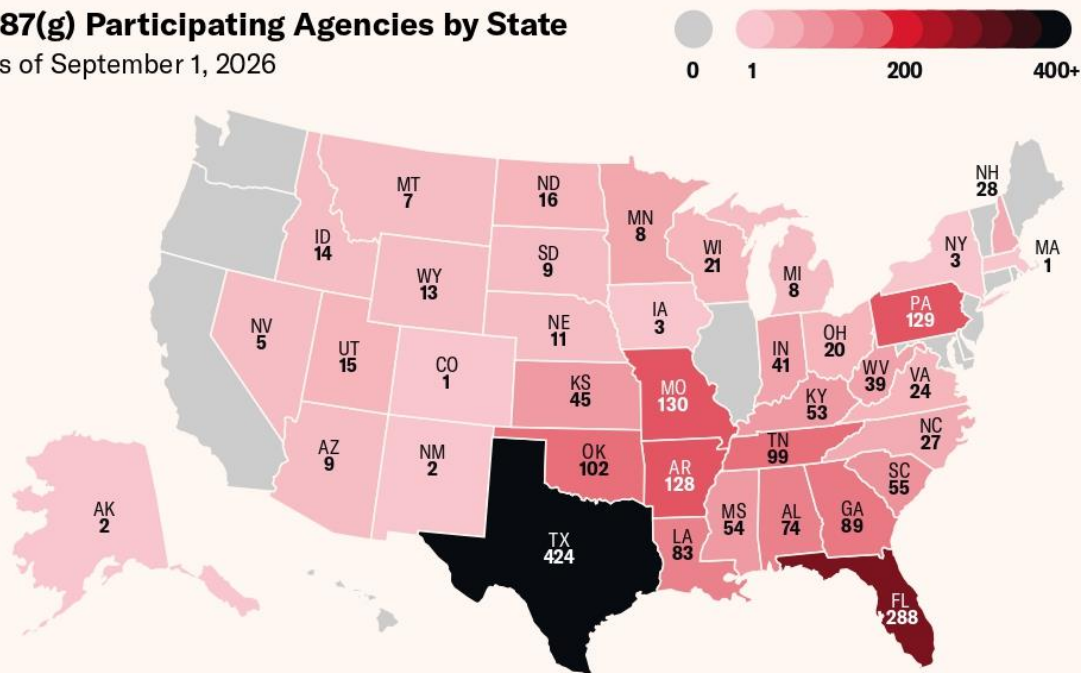
²⁴ See Nicholas Nehamas et al., "Homeland Security Missions Falter Amid Focus on Deportations," *The New York Times*, Nov. 16, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/16/us/politics/dhs-agents-reassigned.html>; Steve Fisher and Vera Bergengruen, "Trump's Immigration Push Diverts U.S. Agents From Drug, Money and Sex-Crime Cases," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 6, 2025; Brad Heath et al., "Exclusive: Thousands of Agents Diverted to Trump Immigration Crackdown," *Reuters*, Mar. 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trump-immigration-crackdown-2025-03-22/>.

²⁵ Beth Schwartzapfel, "How Trump's Immigration Focus Hinders Federal Crime Fighting," *The Marshall Project*, Oct. 4, 2025, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2025/10/04/federal-government-trump-ice-crime>.

population—or 88.2 million people. While state and local law enforcement are sometimes gaining equipment and reimbursement for salaries and other expenses, they are also being drained of personnel and time that would otherwise be devoted to local public safety priorities as their work shifts to colluding in dragnet immigration enforcement.

287(g) Participating Agencies by State

As of September 1, 2026



Source: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g>, accessed September 2, 2026.

As noted by Sarah Pierce, Director of Social Policy at Third Way, in her testimony before this Subcommittee, the Trump administration is, in fact, “weakening public safety infrastructure by delaying and canceling grants,” and it has terminated more than \$820 million in public safety grants.

State and local law enforcement agencies are being misled by the Trump administration. The reality is that the vast majority of civil immigration arrests bear no relationship to serious crimes affecting American communities. Less than 4 percent of immigrants detained in July 2026 had violent criminal convictions; this was the latest period for which data was available.²⁶ In many states, the majority of immigration arrests are of people whose only legal violation is for their immigration status.²⁷

Dragnet targeting of immigrants as potential drug traffickers and perpetrators of serious crimes has no evidentiary basis. Numerous studies show that immigrants are less likely to commit

²⁶ Albert Sun and Allison McCann, “ICE Arrests Soar as People With No Criminal Record Are Increasingly Targeted,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/08/27/us/ice-immigrant-arrests-trump-deportation-dhs.html>.

²⁷ *Id.*

crimes than citizens, and increased immigration does not raise crime levels.²⁸ In 2024, four out of five individuals convicted of drug trafficking were U.S. citizens,²⁹ while between 2022 and 2024, just 11 people who entered the United States between ports of entry and were stopped by Border Patrol were carrying fentanyl.³⁰

While they divert police and community resources to immigration enforcement, ICE collaboration programs including 287(g) do not drive down rates of serious crime.³¹ Studies show that participation in the program drives up arrest rates and instances of holding people in local jails for minor criminal offenses and traffic infractions—in some counties, solely on the misdemeanor charge of driving without license.³² These offenses “do not have any material relationship to community safety,” while outsourcing to local law enforcement means that “ICE escapes accountability for racial profiling, disparate sentences and family separation,” as one scholar puts it.³³

IV. The Case for Sanctuary Laws

Across the country, city and state elected leaders have chosen to enact sanctuary measures. While these measures vary, they generally do not preclude all collaboration or cooperation with ICE—they impose limits. The federal government is notified of every single individual booked into a local jail, and nothing prevents ICE from picking up individuals when they are released from local custody—this is a matter of ICE prioritization and ICE decision-making. But forcing communities to honor an ICE detainer, or 48-hour hold, means communities are prioritizing jail space for ICE rather than local public safety threats.

²⁸ “Immigration Does Not Raise Crime, UCI-led Study Finds, Refuting Common Assumption,” UC Irvine School of Urban Ecology, June 27, 2017, https://socialecology.uci.edu/news/immigration-does-not-raise-crime-uci-led-study-finds-refuting-common-assumption?utm_source=chatgpt.com citing Graham C. Ousey and Charis E. Kubrin, Immigration and Crime: Assessing a Contentious Issue 1:63-84 (Jan. 2018) <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092026>.

²⁹ David J. Bier and Sahana Krishnamurthy, “US Citizens Were 80 Percent of All Convicted Drug Traffickers in 2024,” Cato Institute, Sept. 16, 2025, <https://www.cato.org/blog/us-citizens-were-80-all-convicted-drug-traffickers-2024>.

³⁰ Julianne McClure and René Kladzyk, “Migrant Drug Seizures by Border Patrol Incredibly Rare, Data Shows,” Project on Government Oversight, Oct. 6, 2025, <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/migrant-drug-seizures-by-border-patrol-incredibly-rare-data-shows>.

³¹ See “287(g) Does Not Fight Crime, but It Does Increase Assaults Against Police Officers,” Cato Institute, June 18, 2022, <https://www.cato.org/blog/287g-does-not-fight-crime-it-does-increase-assaults-against-police-officers>; Letter from American Civil Liberties Union et al. to Secretary Mayorkas, Re: 7 Leading Immigrant Rights Groups Urge You to End ICE’s 287(g) Program, Feb. 21, 2023, <https://immigrantjustice.org/wpcontent/uploads/2025/05/230221GroupSignOnLetter287g.pdf>.

³² See Eric P. Baumer and Min Xie, “Federal–local Partnerships on Immigration Law Enforcement: Are the Policies Effective in Reducing Violent Victimization?,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 22, no. 3 (Mar. 14, 2023): 417–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12619>; Erin Griffard, “Weakening the Deportation Pipeline by Encouraging Local Law Enforcement Agencies to Terminate Their 287(g) Agreements: Local Strategies Grounded in Administrative and Moral Implications,” *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* 36, no. 3 (2022): 1088–1111.

³³ Erin Griffard, “Weakening the Deportation Pipeline by Encouraging Local Law Enforcement Agencies to Terminate Their 287(g) Agreements: Local Strategies Grounded in Administrative and Moral Implications,” *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal* 36, no. 3 (2022): 1103.

Studies show that sanctuary policies operate as intended, cutting in half the deportation of people with no criminal convictions, while having no effect on deportation of people with convictions for violent crimes. That is likely because most sanctuary policies have exceptions for people convicted of serious crimes, allowing local law enforcement to hold them and coordinate their transfer to ICE.³⁴

State legislatures and municipal governments have weighed the equities and enacted sanctuary measures as public safety measures. The most powerful case for sanctuary is the experience of states, cities, and communities *without* sanctuary measures—where people are afraid of the state and local police who are supposed to serve and protect them.

1. Community Safety and Confidence in Local Police

Partnering with ICE and Border Patrol puts state and local officers at risk of reputational harm and a loss of community trust, particularly because members of the public do not know the identity of masked agents committing abuses in their streets. For example, at immigration checkpoints in the Key Largo area of Florida, masked agents have pulled people from their cars and, in one instance recorded by a local reporter, dragged a U.S. citizen from her car while she was en route to work at a local hospital. She was detained in an unmarked vehicle as agents searched her belongings. She reported that neither she nor bystanders knew whether the agents were federal or local. In a written statement, she said: “The individuals themselves never told me who they were, and their vehicle had no visible identification. They were also wearing masks, which heightened my fear, confusion, and sense of danger.”³⁵

Studies have long shown that when local law enforcement are involved in immigration enforcement, including the 287(g) program, immigrant community members are less likely to report serious crimes and seek protection—undermining public safety for all, while making it more likely that Latino community members will themselves suffer violence from perpetrators exploiting their vulnerability and fear of ICE.³⁶ This is especially true for survivors of domestic

³⁴ David K. Hausman, “Sanctuary policies reduce deportations without increasing crime,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 117, no. 44 (November 3, 2020): 27,262–27,267, <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/44/27262>.

³⁵ Ana Claudia Chacin and David Goodhue, “Exclusive: Woman Detained by Feds in Keys Says She Was Following Agents’ Orders,” *Miami Herald*, Dec. 6, 2025, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article313427795.html>.

³⁶ Letter from Jan Schakowsky, Adriano Espaillat, Mike Quigley & 57 other Members of Congress, to Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Sec. (Feb. 11, 2021), <https://perma.cc/WM3Y-Y3P2> (citing “Immigrants’ Deportations, Local Crime, and Police Effectiveness,” IZA Institute of Labor Economics, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp12413.pdf>); Tom K. Wong, “Sanctuary cities don’t ‘breed crime.’ They encourage people to report crime,” *The Washington Post*, Apr. 24, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/04/24/sanctuary-cities-dont-breed-crime-they-encourage-people-to-report-crime/>; Baumer, E. P., & Xie, M. (2023). Federal–local partnerships on immigration law enforcement: Are the policies effective in reducing violent victimization? *Criminology & Public Policy*, 22, 417–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12619>.

violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.³⁷ Immigrants are less likely to leave the house or drive anywhere for fear of encountering police—exactng harm on local businesses and leading to higher costs of services and goods as immigrants leave the labor force, particularly in communities with large noncitizen populations.³⁸

Community experiences of the 287(g) program during the second Trump administration bear out these findings. In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, residents reported fear and reluctance to contact police after one law enforcement agency in the county joined the 287(g) program. “I don’t know anybody that has called the police since this 287(g) has passed,” a local activist said. “Because they don’t trust them. Domestic violence and labor abuse and all kinds of things are happening and nobody’s going to help.”³⁹

In Lake Worth Beach, Florida, where just under half of all residents are Latino, residents and activists have warned that children are not going to school out of fear, people are afraid to go to work, and neighbors are no longer seen outside their homes.⁴⁰ In December 2025, a local community campaign posted signs around the city with messages such as “Florida Highway Patrol Kidnapped Someone Here.”⁴¹ A local city commissioner said that local police had taken a “credibility hit” because “[i]f the perception is out there that they’re involved with ICE, you already are going to have a diminishment of local law enforcement ... people don’t trust them then. The whole label of serve and protect — you have now a lot of people who don’t feel served and protected.”⁴²

³⁷ Kathryn Finley, “Access to Justice in a Climate of Fear: New Hurdles and Barriers for Survivors of Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence,” Center for Migration Studies, Jan. 29, 2019 <https://cmsny.org/publications/finley-climate-of-fear/>.

³⁸ See Tom K. Wong et al., “The Impact of Interior Immigration Enforcement on the Day-to-Day Behaviors of Undocumented Immigrants,” U.S. Immigration Policy Center, UC San Diego, Apr. 3, 2019, <https://usipc.ucsd.edu/publications/usipc-working-paper-1.pdf>; Baumer, E. P., & Xie, M. (2023). Federal–local partnerships on immigration law enforcement: Are the policies effective in reducing violent victimization? *Criminology & Public Policy*, 22, 417–455, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12619>.

³⁹ Alex Burnes, Bolt, Voters Ousted This Pennsylvania Sheriff After He Signed Up to Collaborate With ICE, Bolts Mag, Nov. 10, 2025, <https://boltsmag.org/sheriff-of-bucks-county-pennsylvania-ousted-in-2025/>.

⁴⁰ Angie DiMichele, “Palm Beach County Leads South Florida in Local Police Agencies With ICE Agreements,” Sun Sentinel, Nov. 21, 2025, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2025/11/21/palm-beach-county-leads-south-florida-in-local-police-agencies-with-ice-agreements/>; Jamie Ostroff, “Immigration Advocates Post Signs Throughout Lake Worth Beach After Recent Arrests,” WFLX, Dec. 11, 2025, <https://www.wflx.com/2025/12/11/immigration-advocates-post-signs-throughout-lake-worth-beach-after-recent-arrests/>.

⁴¹ Angie DiMichelle, “Palm Beach County leads South Florida in local police agencies with ICE agreements,” Sun Sentinel, Nov. 21, 2025, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2025/11/21/palm-beach-county-leads-south-florida-in-local-police-agencies-with-ice-agreements/>; Jamie Ostroff, “Immigration Advocates Post Signs Throughout Lake Worth Beach After Recent Arrests,” WFLX, Dec. 11, 2025, <https://www.wflx.com/2025/12/11/immigration-advocates-post-signs-throughout-lake-worth-beach-after-recent-arrests/>.

⁴² Angie DiMichele, “Palm Beach County Leads South Florida in Local Police Agencies With ICE Agreements,” Sun Sentinel, Nov. 21, 2025, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2025/11/21/palm-beach-county-leads-south-florida-in-local-police-agencies-with-ice-agreements/>.

When local police engage in immigration enforcement, they render themselves “indistinguishable” from federal agents.⁴³ Particularly because federal agents increasingly do not wear identification and conceal their faces behind masks in 287(g) jurisdictions, it is impossible for the public to know whether local arrests by masked agents involve local police—leading to distrust, fear, and blame.

2. *Sapping Scarce Resources*

An agency’s participation in the 287(g) program saps and diverts limited law enforcement resources. Local law enforcement agencies devoting time to checkpoints, interrogations, and other collusion with ICE have less staff time and resources to address serious and urgent public safety needs. For example, when Maricopa County, Arizona took part in the Task Force Model of the 287(g) program in 2008, “[d]eputies failed to meet the county’s standard for response times for life-threatening emergencies, with two-thirds of patrol cars arriving late to the most serious calls for police assistance.”⁴⁴

As Dubuque County, Iowa Sheriff Joe Kennedy explained to a local news outlet:

“If I’m here, in Dubuque County having a heart attack- I don’t really want to hear that there’s no officer responding to assist because they’re assisting in Allamakee County with an ICE raid ... I don’t think it’s in the best interest of the people in Dubuque County, using Dubuque County dollars, in other places, to help enforce what the federal government is supposed to be doing.”⁴⁵

The Dallas, Texas police chief declined to join the 287(g) program despite an alleged \$25 million offer from ICE—with a requirement that Dallas officers meet a quota of detaining “50 people a day—saying it would divert officers from core policing duties and harm the department’s efforts to improve response times. (ICE denied the quota.)⁴⁶

Under the jail-based model of the 287(g) program, local police that lack enough jail space overall hold people for ICE on detainers, even if those people pose no public safety threat. From the perspective of law enforcement, when jails use space to hold individuals for ICE—keeping these

⁴³ Tom K. Wong et al., “How Interior Immigration Enforcement Affects Trust in Law Enforcement,” U.S. Immigration Policy Center, UC San Diego, Apr. 3, 2019, <https://usipc.ucsd.edu/publications/usipc-working-paper-2.pdf>.

⁴⁴ National Immigration Forum, “Reviving 287(g) Agreements Under the New Administration: Implementation, Concerns, and Implications,” Apr. 28, 2025, <https://forumtogether.org/article/reviving-the-287g-agreements-under-the-new-administration-implementation-concerns-and-implications/> (citing Clint Bolick, “Mission Unaccomplished: The Misplaced Priorities of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office,” Goldwater Institute, No. 229, Dec. 2, 2008, <https://www.scribd.com/document/23191611/Mission-Unaccomplished>).

⁴⁵ Emma’le Maas, “Dubuque County Sheriff Defends Decision to Decline ICE Program,” KWWL, May 19, 2025, https://www.kwwl.com/news/top-stories/dubuque-county-sheriff-defends-decision-to-decline-ice-program/article_ea3f95d9-e376-4080-8b1f-b73ced39348f.html.

⁴⁶ Michael Lozano, “Dallas police chief says ICE partnership would require 50 detainments a day quota” Spectrum Local News, Nov. 7, 2025, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/tx/austin/news/2025/11/06/dallas-police-chief-says-ice-partnership-would-require-50-detainments-a-day-quota->.

individuals beyond their release date and against the better judgment of local officials—it means they are foregoing detention of individuals they believe do pose a serious public safety risk.

3. *Liability and Confusion for Local Law Enforcement*

State and local officials—and the municipal and state governments that employ them—face serious risk of lawsuits and money damages when they entangle themselves with federal immigration agents. Indeed, state and local officers conducting immigration enforcement are arguably at greater risk of lawsuits than their federal counterparts. As the Maryland attorney general noted in a 2025 guidance for the state’s agencies: “Compared to their federal counterparts, [state and local] officers face more significant exposure to civil lawsuits for violations of federal or state law.”⁴⁷ Likewise, the attorney general of New Mexico’s guidance warns, “[c]hoosing to enforce federal law can expose local law enforcement departments and officers to civil liability.”⁴⁸

Localities have faced lawsuits and reached settlement agreements costing them thousands and even millions—for example, \$92.5 million in a class action settlement in New York for people held unlawfully based on ICE detainees.⁴⁹

ICE has long issued detainers based on faulty information from unreliable databases; one federal court described the databases as “Inaccurate, Incomplete and Error-Filled.”⁵⁰ Local agencies, relying on ICE detainers, have repeatedly and wrongfully held thousands of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Attorney General of Maryland, Guidance For Maryland Law Enforcement On The Requirements Of Maryland Law When Working With Federal Law Enforcement Agencies, Oct. 2025, https://oag.maryland.gov/FederalActionsResponse/Documents/pdfs/Memorandum_Law%20Enforcement_OCT%2025.pdf.

⁴⁸ New Mexico Department of Justice, Guidance for Law Enforcement Concerning Civil Immigration Enforcement Action, Jan. 22, 2025, <https://nm DOJ.gov/get-help/guidance-on-immigration-enforcement>.

⁴⁹ See Luis Ferré-Sadurní, “New York City to Pay \$92.5 Million to Improperly Detained Immigrants,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 18, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/18/nyregion/migrants-detention-settlement-deportation.html>.

⁵⁰ *Gonzalez v. Immigr. & Customs Enf’t*, 416 F. Supp. 3d 995, 1016 (C.D. Cal. 2019) (rev’d and vacated by 975 F.3d 788 (9th Cir. 2020)) (issuing a permanent injunction limiting certain ICE offices from issuing detainers). Although the Ninth Circuit reversed the District Court’s decision, it did not hold that the databases used by ICE to make probable cause determinations for its detainers are actually reliable. Instead, it provided a clear legal standard for determining database reliability and remanded the case to the District Court for additional fact-finding in line with this standard. The case settled in November 2024, with its terms taking effect in March 2025. See Class Action Settlement Agreement & Release, *Gonzalez v. Immigr. & Customs Enf’t*, No. CV. 13-04416 AB (FFMx) (C.D. Cal. Nov. 25, 2024), https://immigrantjustice.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/no-content-type/2025-01/Gonzalez-Detainers-Class-Settlement-Agreement_Nov2024.pdf.

⁵¹ See Spencer Amdur, “Florida Sheriff Worked With ICE to Illegally Jail and Nearly Deport US Citizen,” ACLU, Dec. 3, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/ice-and-border-patrol-abuses/florida-sheriffworked-ice-illegally-jail-and>; David J. Bier, “U.S. Citizens Targeted by ICE,” Cato Institute, Aug. 29, 2019, <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/irpb-8.pdf>; *Uroza v. Salt Lake Cnty.*, No. 2:11CV713DAK, 2014 WL 4457300, at *5 (D. Utah Sept. 10, 2014) (“Between 2008 and 2012, ICE issued detainers against more than 800 U.S. citizens and 28,000 legal permanent residents.”). 16 Appendix A, Class Action Settlement.

Local law enforcements joining ICE raids or making street arrests appear to be operating with limited supervision from ICE and other federal agents, and may be called upon to interpret complex federal immigration laws and policies on the fly.⁵² They may follow the cues and actions of federal agents who believe themselves immune from liability or themselves lack sufficient experience and training for these sensitive operations—especially as an ICE hiring spree and extremely diminished eligibility and training standards undermine the overall competence of ICE.⁵³

Federal agencies may ask state and local law enforcement for assistance in street operations that have proven especially dangerous due to ICE and Border Patrol’s aggression. Examples of such requests are: providing backup or support in street arrests and raids; setting up or operating joint checkpoints; and engaging in crowd management and observing or surveilling protests. As the Maryland Attorney General’s Office notes: “These contexts carry the risk of conflict with State law” — particularly where state privacy laws and accountability requirements exceed federal law protections.⁵⁴

The Jail Enforcement and Warrant Service Officer models of 287(g) also pose risks to law enforcement agencies, who face pressure or even a state law mandate to hold individuals for immigration purposes in jails that become overcrowded and dangerous—particularly during surges of immigration enforcement operations.⁵⁵ In November 2025, the Bristol County, Massachusetts sheriff settled an \$800,000 lawsuit over unsafe jail conditions. “My predecessor’s decision to involve the [Bristol County Sheriff’s Office] in immigration enforcement left the citizens of Bristol County and the taxpayers of Massachusetts exposed to legal liability,” he said, noting that the taxpayer money would otherwise have gone to “campus improvement projects.”⁵⁶

⁵² See Letter from Jan Schakowsky, Adriano Espaillat, Mike Quigley & 57 other Members of Congress, to Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security (Feb. 11, 2021), <https://perma.cc/WM3Y-Y3P2> (citing “Assumption of Risk: Legal Liabilities for Local Governments That Choose to Enforce Federal Immigration Laws,” National Immigrant Justice Center, Mar. 2018, https://immigrantjustice.org/sites/default/files/contenttype/research-item/documents/2018-03/Assumption_of_Risk_March2018_FINAL.pdf).

⁵³ See Liz Landers and Maca Lenei Buhre, “As ICE Boosts Recruitment, Critics Concerned Over Changes to Hiring and Training Standards,” *PBS News*, Dec. 5, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/as-ice-boosts-recruitment-critics-concerned-over-changes-to-hiring-and-training-standards>.

⁵⁴ Office of the Maryland Attorney General, Guidance for Maryland Law Enforcement on the Requirements of Maryland Law When Working with Federal Law Enforcement Agencies, Oct. 2025, https://oag.maryland.gov/FederalActionsResponse/Documents/pdfs/Memorandum_Law%20Enforcement_OCT%2025.pdf.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Charles Maldonado, “State Challenge to ‘Sanctuary’ Policy at N.O. Jail Can Move Forward, Judge Rules,” *Verite News*, Nov. 7, 2025, <https://veritenews.org/2025/11/07/louisiana-challenge-sanctuary-immigration-ice/>.

⁵⁶ Frank Mulligan, “Bristol County sheriff’s office settles \$10M lawsuit by ICE detainees for \$800K,” *The Standard-Times*, Nov. 17, 2025, <https://www.southcoasttoday.com/story/news/2025/11/17/bristol-county-sheriffs-office-settles-10m-ice-lawsuit-for-800k/87323746007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=false&gca-epti=z112701p002750c002750e004300v112701&gca-ft=8&gca-ds=sophi>.

Neither the federal nor state government paid for the settlement, and the sheriff said he would have faced \$1 million in legal fees if the lawsuit had gone to trial.⁵⁷

Individual law enforcement officers may believe they are obligated to assist federal agents, even if they are not designated as 287(g) officers or their requested actions fall outside the scope of their agency's 287(g) agreement. Law enforcement agencies engaged in the Task Force Model may find their 287(g)-designated staff abiding by ICE's commands, in contravention of their own. For agencies receiving reimbursements and financial incentives from the federal government or state government, the risk is greatest: Officers may fear that if they fail to provide assistance requested by federal agents, their agency may lose the funding it desperately needs for their salaries, as well as access to performance bonuses and new equipment.

V. "Sanctuary" Is Not the Ultimate Answer: We Need Transformative Change to Our Broken Immigration System

While states have the right to make choices about how their resources are used—and the ACLU will continue to defend the constitutional principles underlying that—immigration policy is fundamentally a federal matter. Our broken immigration system should be addressed by Congress.

No one in America should have to live in fear of encountering a masked agent—no matter who they are—because ours is a nation of laws, not repression and intimidation. Americans want an orderly, fair, and functioning immigration system—not the chaos and cruelty of mass, indiscriminate deportations. Americans across the country support a broad path to citizenship, including 81 percent supporting a pathway for undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children and 75 percent supporting one for undocumented immigrants generally.⁵⁸

We need to replace our broken immigration system—including the immigration agencies that inspire fear, anger, and opposition in major parts of our country—with a new system built around a mission to manage immigration effectively to make our country stronger and more prosperous, including supporting long-term residents to gain legal status and earn citizenship. This new immigration management agency should be navigable and non-punitive by default, with safe and proportionate accountability tools where necessary. There must be mechanisms to hold federal agencies accountable for legal violations—to the public, courts and Congress. Such a system can earn back public trust by consistently delivering fair process and just results—and such a system could reduce or even remove the need for sanctuary policies.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ Megan Brennan, "Americans' Support for Immigration Down, Still Strong," *Gallup*, July 9, 2026, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/712289/americans-support-immigration-down-strong.aspx>.

VI. Conclusion

Twenty years ago, as our nation continued to reel from the September 11th, 2001 attacks and their aftermath, President George W. Bush called for comprehensive immigration reform. The ACLU would not agree with much of what he called for, but his concluding words continue to resonate. He said of the immigration debate:

We cannot build a unified country by inciting people to anger, or playing on anyone's fears, or exploiting the issue of immigration for political gain. We must always remember that real lives will be affected by our debates and decisions, and that every human being has dignity and value no matter what their citizenship papers say.⁵⁹

As we look to the end of this session of Congress and the beginning of a new chapter, we urge Congress to prioritize debate over major immigration reform—without vitriol, and in recognition of the value of every life and the imperative to make our communities safe and free—for all who call them home.

⁵⁹ “Fact Sheet: Overview: Comprehensive Immigration Reform,” The American Presidency Project, May 15, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/fact-sheet-overview-comprehensive-immigration-reform>.