

Pennsylvania Immigration & Citizenship Coalition

Advocating for immigrants, migrants and refugees

Testimony Submitted by the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition to the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Public Safety March 12th 2014

Member organizations include:

American Immigration Lawyers Association (Philadelphia Chapter)
Amnesty International-Philadelphia Chapter
Arab American Community Development Corporation
Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Office for Pastoral Care for Refugees and Migrants
Asian Americans United
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters
Boat People SOS-Delaware Valley
Casa de la Cultura
Ceiba
Center for Literacy
Children's Crisis Treatment Center, West African Refugee Assistance
Church World Service - Lancaster
Community Legal Services
Congreso de Latinos Unidos
Esperanza Immigration Legal Services
Friends of Farmworkers
Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano
Health Federation of Philadelphia
HIAS Pennsylvania
Indochinese American Council
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Educational and Vocational Services, Refugee Assistance Program
Keystone Progress
Latino Leadership Alliance of Bucks County
Lutheran Children and Family Service
Maternal & Child Health Consortium of Chester County
Nationalities Service Center
New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia
PhilaPOSH
Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center
Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
PRIME - Ecumenical Commitment to Refugees
Project SHINE, Center for Intergenerational Learning, Temple University
SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania
SEIU 32BJ

The Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC) is a diverse coalition of over 50 member organizations and hundreds of individual members. Our membership includes community groups, social and legal service providers, advocacy organizations, faith communities, community leaders and concerned individuals. Our mission is *to advance immigrants' rights and promote their full integration into society by advocating with a unified voice for greater public understanding and welcoming public policies throughout Pennsylvania.*

PICC has a long standing opposition to the partnership between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement. As the testimony from Philadelphia community members today has demonstrated, local police collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sacrifices the mission of integrating immigrant populations into the Philadelphia community at large, endangers the success of community policing, and threatens the human and civil rights of all Philadelphia residents.

PICC has been involved in advocacy with the City of Philadelphia for many years now regarding the need to enact policy that would address the impact of local police collaboration with federal immigration enforcement on Philadelphia's immigrant communities. From opposing the Clear Act in 2004, to convening a coalition to oppose the implementation of Secure Communities in 2009 and PARS in 2010, PICC has raised its voice against local police/ICE collaboration for many years. At the same time, we have worked closely with the City to improve public safety and immigrant access to services through advocacy for policies including Philadelphia Police Department Directive 71 in 2005 on language services, Executive Order 9-08 in 2008 extending language access requirements to all City agencies, and Executive Order 8-09 in 2009 on non-inquiry and non-disclosure of immigration status.

Along with our partners in the Philadelphia Family Unity Network (PFUN), PICC supports a policy that eliminates local police enforcement of ICE holds for all immigrants, without exceptions. We support this policy for the following reasons:

Local police involvement in the enforcement of federal civil immigration laws shapes how immigrants perceive police agencies, increases fear and avoidance of police, limits how frequently they report crime, and jeopardizes the safety of entire communities. Law enforcement officers rely on community trust to do their jobs

effectively. Last year, Police Commissioner Chief Ramsey, as leader of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, signed on to a national letter opposing the federal SAFE Act

- (attached) that stated: “Requiring police to investigate and detain community members based solely upon their immigration status hurts public safety, and wastes limited law enforcement resources. And the complexity of immigration law, combined with the lack of adequate training and resources, increases the risk of civil liability for local police departments tasked with investigating and enforcing potential immigration law violations”.
- We understand that some immigrants, like some U.S.-born citizens, will commit acts that violate the laws and norms of this country. When this happens, the criminal justice system is the appropriate arbiter of punishment. Police enforcement of ICE holds can subject individuals to the additional penalty of detention and deportation on top of incarceration. These detentions and deportations impose an unnecessary double punishment on individuals and families, and often result in significant impacts including the separation of family members and the removal of a primary breadwinner.
- By honoring ICE holds, the City is inadvertently hampering its ability to implement other policies that it has established to create an immigrant-friendly city, for example, Executive Order No. 8-09 on non-inquiry and non-disclosure of immigration status. The collaboration between local police and ICE has resulted in fear and distrust in immigrant communities and led to the perception that local police are actively seeking to enforce federal immigration laws. This can impact immigrant communities’ willingness to interact with City government more generally.
- The manner in which individuals are apprehended when local law enforcement are charged with enforcement of federal immigration law is also cause for concern. As a number of today’s testimonies have demonstrated, racial profiling continues to be a significant problem in many ICE hold cases.

Although we are disappointed that the City of Philadelphia has failed to establish a policy against ICE holds to date, we are encouraged that the current administration is now ready to take a step toward making Philadelphia a truly welcoming and immigrant-friendly city. We urge the City to be bold in its vision and follow the lead of other localities including Newark, New Jersey and Cook County, Illinois, with a decision to end all ICE holds.

Sincerely

Natasha Kelemen
Executive Director