



National Task Force  
to End Sexual and  
Domestic Violence Against Women

September 15, 2015

Dear Senator,

As the Steering Committee of the National Taskforce to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (“NTF”), comprising national leadership organizations advocating on behalf of sexual and domestic violence victims and women’s rights, we represent hundreds of organizations across the country dedicated to ensuring **all** survivors of violence receive the protections they deserve. For this reason, we write to express our deep concerns about the impact the “Stop Sanctuary Cities Act” (S.1814) and other potential amendments seeking to defund “sanctuary” cities will cause on immigrant victims of domestic violence.

We are concerned the lack of funding to these cities will significantly hinder the ability of certain localities to build trust and cooperation between vulnerable and isolated victims of domestic and sexual violence and law enforcement. Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of the bipartisan Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”), which has, since it was first enacted, included critical protections for immigrant victims of domestic and sexual violence. The Stop Sanctuary Cities Act undermines the spirit and protections of VAWA and will have the chilling effect of pushing immigrant survivors and their children deeper into the shadows and into danger.

As recognized in VAWA, bipartisan legislation supporting our nation's response to domestic and sexual violence and stalking, immigrant victims of violent crimes are often fearful of contacting law enforcement due to fear that they will be deported. A recent and comprehensive survey shows that 41% of Latinos believe that the primary reason Latinos/as victims of domestic violence do not come forward is fear of deportation.<sup>1</sup>

Policies that minimize the intertwining of local law enforcement with ICE help bring the most vulnerable victims out of the shadows by creating trust between law enforcement and the immigrant community, which in turn helps protect our *entire* community.<sup>2</sup> Abusers and traffickers use fear of deportation of the victims as a tool to silence and trap them, and S.1814 will reinforce this tool. Not only are the individual victims harmed, but their fear of law enforcement leads many to abstain from reporting violent perpetrators or coming forward, and, as a result, dangerous criminals are not identified and go unpunished. These criminals remain on the streets and continue to be a danger to our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/7112130?>; <http://nomore.org/nomas/>

<sup>2</sup> A study conducted by the University of Illinois- Chicago found that increased involvement of local police and immigration enforcement eroded trust between the police and immigrants, undocumented and documented. 45% of documented immigrants were less likely to report a crime while 70% of undocumented immigrants responded similarly. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/07/sanctuary-cities-public-safety-kate-steinle-san-francisco>



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The Stop Sanctuary Cities Act undermines policies that cities have determined are appropriate for their respective communities, and decrease the ability of law enforcement agencies to respond to violent crimes and assist all (immigrant, citizens, etc.) victims of crime. As recognized in VAWA, law enforcement plays a critical role in our coordinated community response to domestic and sexual violence. Federal law enforcement funding supports critical training, equipment, and agency staffing that assists domestic and sexual violence victims. These amendments will allow violent crimes to go uninvestigated and leave victims without redress due to reductions in funding.

For these reasons, we urge you to affirm the intent and spirit of VAWA and oppose the Stop Sanctuary Cities Act and other amendments that may be introduced. Thank you very much for taking this important step to protect and support immigrant survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

For more information, please contact Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence at [grace@wscadv.org](mailto:grace@wscadv.org), (206) 389-2515 x 209, or Andrea Carcamo, National Latin@ Network: Casa de Esperanza, at [acarcamo@casadeesperanza.org](mailto:acarcamo@casadeesperanza.org), (703) 942-5582.

Sincerely,

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence