



National Task Force
to End Sexual and
Domestic Violence Against Women

July 21, 2015

Dear Representative,

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 of the “Enforce the Law for Sanctuary Cities Act” (H.R. 3009), which amends section 241(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

As government officials, we ask you to approach this issue from the perspective of a leader and be sure of the implications this bill can have on entire communities. All parties have the common goal of making communities safer. This bill will encourage law enforcement to enforce immigration law, and will significantly hinder the ability of certain communities 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. This bill undermines the spirit and protections of VAWA and will have the effect of pushing immigrant survivors and their children (many of whom are likely U.S. Citizens) 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 do not come forward is fear of deportation.¹

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* communities.² Fear of deportation also strengthens the ability of abusers and traffickers to silence and trap their victims. 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

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

² 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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identified and go unpunished. These criminals remain on the streets and continue to be a danger to their communities.

This bill undermines policies that local communities have determined are appropriate for their localities, 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. H.R. 3009 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 provisions above. 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, or (206) 389-2515 x 209, or Andrea Carcamo, National Latin@ Network: Casa de Esperanza, at acarcamo@casadeesperanza.org or (703) 942-5582.

Sincerely,

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence