

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

October 15, 2015

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to S. 2146, Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act

Dear Senator:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 40 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to strongly urge you to vote against S. 2146, Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act. S. 2146 would impose mandatory minimum sentences for illegal reentry and withhold federal funding for states and local jurisdictions, characterized as “sanctuary cities,” that limit interaction between federal immigration agencies and local law enforcement agencies in order to build trust in the community and promote local public safety goals. NHLA recommends a “no” vote on S. 2146, the Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act, and any similar legislation, including amendments. **NHLA will closely monitor any votes on S.2146 for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community.**

Such legislation to mandate that states and localities comply with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainer requests, despite their unconstitutionality, is misguided and scapegoats immigrants by making sweeping and false generalizations, particularly of Latino immigrants. Numerous studies have shown that immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans, less likely to commit crimes, and less likely to be repeat offenders. Detainer requests and requests to notify blur the distinction between local police and federal immigration enforcement, severely undermining community-police relations and trust.

This legislation would withhold law enforcement funding for states and local jurisdictions through the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, making it harder to keep our communities safe. More troubling still is that it would also withhold Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds used to address affordable housing shortages and support anti-poverty initiatives. Using immigration penalties and policies as a means to target criminal activity is not the solution, particularly by compelling local law enforcement to comply with unconstitutional detainer requests. To make it harder for communities to foster trust with local law enforcement or obtain necessary federal support to improve our most underserved communities would only result in greater distrust of law enforcement agencies and increase the number of unreported crimes.

Most concerning are those provisions that would require greater penalties for illegal reentry cases, along with a mandatory sentence of at least five years imprisonment for certain offenders. At a time when America’s focus should be on decreasing the use of mandatory minimum sentences, legislation such as this is in direct conflict with those efforts, and the

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Justice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation

communities likely to suffer the most will be primarily Latino. Provisions such these only serve to increase criminalization of our immigration population, and would tear families apart. In order to effectively address problems with our broken immigration system, Congress should resume the effort started in the 113th Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns. Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno, of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org, or Richard Morales, of Hispanic Federation, at rmorales@hispanicfederation.org, with any questions regarding this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair