



Katie Belgard, Political Director, SEIU 32BJ

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SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

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My name is Katie Belgard and I am the Political Director of SEIU 32BJ, District 615. We represent 145,000 building service workers along the East Coast, and [insert member #] members here in Massachusetts. I'm testifying here today on behalf of our members in order to urge you to oppose House Bill 1856, an Act relative to sanctuary cities and town. H.B. 1856, if passed, will prohibit any city or town, which fails to enforce federal immigration laws, from receiving unrestricted general government aid. Bills like this, and the Vitter Sanctuary bill, a similar piece of legislation introduced at the federal level that failed to pass, promote a culture of hostility towards immigrant communities. If codified into law, H.B. 1856 will promote reckless deportations that punish hard working men and women immigrants. H.B. 1856 flies in the face of the values that we hold close as a Union, a community, and a State. Vote "no" on H.B. 1856 and take a stand against cynical and anti-immigrant politics.

Our union includes the full breadth of America today. 32BJ members come from 64 different countries, speak 28 different languages, and represent a microcosm of immigrants as well as families with long histories in the U.S. We all share the American Dream, a commitment to making life better for working families, and a fundamental respect for the dignity of all people.

350 localities across the United States have passed legislation to limit local law enforcement's involvement in federal immigration enforcement. These localities have done the right thing and we would be smart to continue to follow their lead. It is good public policy to promote trust between law enforcement and the communities they are charged to serve. The State is responsible for protecting the health, welfare, and well-being of *all* of its residents. H.B. 1856 would make this task impossible. When communities cannot contact local law enforcement for fear of deportation or deportation of their loved ones, it undermines public safety for all. When local law enforcement participates in federal immigration enforcement it results in deportations, detentions, a culture of fear, and broken families. Additionally, when local law enforcement is forced to do the work of the federal government it diverts precious local resources away from community priorities. Countless law enforcement leaders have taken a stand against this type of legislation and our State should too, by opposing H.B. 1856.

Building a culture of trust between immigrants and the communities where they live, work, pay taxes, and raise their children is imperative. Immigrants make our state's economy function. Immigrants work in essential industries that make Massachusetts a good place for industry and residents alike. However, when immigrants face insecurity in the workplace, on the street, and in their homes, our whole state suffers the consequences. Our state must continue to encourage immigrants to come out of the shadows, and should not push them deeper underground.

New England District 615

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On behalf of SEIU 32BJ and our members, please stand with our immigrant community and vote to oppose House Bill 1856. Thank you for your time.