

Why North Carolina Lawmakers Should Oppose HB 318

On September 29, 2015, North Carolina's legislature is voting on a sweeping anti-immigrant bill (HB 318) that would, among other things, ban local officials from promoting community trust between their residents and police. It forbids them from taking steps to ensure that victims and witnesses to crimes feel comfortable cooperating with the police, and could divert scarce local law enforcement resources to federal immigration functions. It would severely restrict the ability of local governments to accurately identify their residents, and prevent residents from using municipal or certain other identity documents in routine and important daily interactions with government officials, courts and law enforcement. HB 318 has the potential to harm North Carolina's citizen and immigrant residents and undermine overall community safety. It sets a dangerous precedent.

HB 318 undermines community safety for all North Carolinians by taking away discretion from local police in prioritizing their work.

The safety of every community member depends on overall trust and willingness to interact with local law enforcement so that they can prevent and investigate crimes. HB 318 would undermine community safety by interfering with common-sense police efforts to assure crime victims and witnesses that they should feel safe when interacting with police to solve and prevent crimes.

HB 318 goes far beyond what is currently required under federal law, pushing police departments to prioritize the maximum enforcement of federal immigration law at every turn, even when not required by federal law, no matter what the police department thinks is right. This means they are pushed toward immigration enforcement even when it interferes with their work preventing and solving serious and violent crimes.

HB 318 undermines community safety for all North Carolinians by preventing local government from relying on important identification documents.

HB 318 would prevent state and local government workers from accepting consular documents or locally issued IDs as valid forms of identification. This would prevent courts, law enforcement officials, hospitals and clinics, shelters, schools and other government agencies from being able to verify the identity of North Carolina residents with whom they interact on a daily basis. This would harm not only non-citizens but also

U.S. citizens, such as survivors of domestic violence, or homeless individuals, who may not have a driver's license, U.S. passport or other identification documents.

HB 318 will allow employers to discriminate against workers and violate information privacy.

By mandating the use of E-verify, HB 318 will result in discriminatory practices by employers who may choose to discriminate against workers based on their race, ethnicity or assumptions about their citizenship or immigration status. After Arizona passed a law requiring all employers to use E-verify, employers in Arizona noticed an increase in hostility towards their Latino workers.

Furthermore, even for employers who do use E-verify, the databases contain significant errors that may falsely identify many authorized workers – including U.S. citizens – as not being authorized to work. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has estimated that if E-verify were mandatory nation-wide, the error rate would result in 3.6 million workers a year being misidentified as unauthorized to work. North Carolina can't afford to put any more pressures on hard-working community members looking for work.

HB 318 will force more residents struggling to find work into deeper hunger and poverty

HB 318 would subject all childless adults seeking work to time limits for how long they can receive nutrition assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the food stamp program). Challenging economic conditions have made it increasingly hard for North Carolina's workers to find and maintain steady, full-time employment with a living wage. HB 318 would prohibit the state from claiming exceptions to time limits allowed under federal law for how long a childless job seeker may receive nutrition assistance. As a result, HB 318 will force more adults to go hungry, threaten their health and well-being and impair their future job prospects, pushing them deeper into poverty.