



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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September 16, 2015

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Member:

I write on behalf of the nation's mayors to register our strong opposition to legislation that would withhold federal law enforcement or other assistance from so-called "sanctuary cities." This includes S. 1814, the "Stop Sanctuary Cities Act," which is currently under development and may be marked up soon by the Senate Judiciary Committee. We urge you to oppose S. 1814 or any similar legislation that may come before the Committee.

We understand that the substitute language that Chairman Grassley is expected to offer on behalf of himself and Senator Vitter would deny Community Development Block Grant, Cops on the Beat, and State Criminal Alien Assistance Program funding to sanctuary cities as defined in the bill. The bill defines a sanctuary city broadly and could affect as many as 300 jurisdictions.

We believe that decisions related to how law enforcement agencies prioritize their resources, direct their workforce, and define the duties of their employees must reside with local government. This includes the role of local police officers in immigration enforcement. Effective policing cannot be achieved by forcing an unwanted role upon the police by threat of sanctions or withholding of law enforcement or other federal assistance funding. At a time when law enforcement agencies are working hard to strengthen police-community relations and build trust, S. 1814 and other legislative proposals to withdraw funding from any "sanctuary city" are particularly troubling.

Shifting the federal responsibility of enforcing civil immigration law to local governments diverts critical resources from their law enforcement agencies, compromises public safety, and hinders local police department efforts to work with immigrant communities in preventing and solving crimes. Immigration enforcement laws and practices must be nationally based, consistent, and fully funded by the federal government. Immigration is a federal, not a state or local, responsibility.

The programs targeted for penalties by S. 1814 provide resources to local and state governments to help them meet critical needs.

Community Development Block Grant: The CDBG program grows local economies and improves the quality of lives for low- and moderate-income citizens by providing formula grants to state and local governments to provide decent housing, a suitable living environment, and economic opportunities within their communities. The program serves households in need, help neighborhoods, and

provide the flexibility to develop partnerships and projects that are vital to communities. Communities use CDBG to respond to current and emerging community development needs, including assisting businesses and creating and retaining jobs in low and moderate income areas, improving the existing housing stock, funding public improvements such as senior centers and homeless facilities, and providing vital public services, such as day care for low-income working families, health care for children, and meals to the elderly.

Cops on the Beat: The COPS program provides vital resources to local and state police departments that help them to strengthen police-community relations and prevent, reduce, and respond to crime. Since its inception in 1994 it has invested approximately \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. It has funded approximately 125,000 additional officers in more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in jurisdictions large and small. Further, studies have shown that it has helped to reduce the crime rate.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program: SCAAP reimburses jurisdictions for a portion of the costs they incur incarcerating certain undocumented criminal aliens, including those who have at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions for violations of state or local law. Currently states and localities are only reimbursed at the rate of 18 cents for every dollar they spend incarcerating these individuals.

The nation's mayors respectfully urge the Committee to focus on fixing our broken immigration system, as it did in bipartisan fashion in the last Congress, rather than passing punitive legislation that penalizes cities trying to build trust with the communities they are charged with protecting and assuring the safety of all of their residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Cochran". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director