



Junta for Progressive Action's Testimony *in support* of H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers ("Trust Act")

Before the Joint Committee on Judiciary
March 22nd, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today and testify in support of H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers, commonly referred to as the TRUST Act.

My Name is Ana María Rivera, and I work for Junta for Progressive Action, the oldest Latino community-based non-profit organization in the City of New Haven. We serve over 6,000 individuals and their families a year. These families come from over 10 different countries seeking to participate in one of the many programs we offer including: ESL, GED and Economic Development. Junta has developed a very strong bond with the community and has built a relationship of trust that is only achieved by being open, respectful and mindful of other cultures.

Developing those relationships has allowed us to be in a position where individuals confide in us when they are confronted with serious and life-threatening situations. In many of the countries where our community members have come from, the police is corrupt, violent and most definitely not trustworthy. The New Haven Police has done an extraordinary job of educating residents and tearing those barriers down, so when S-Comm was implemented it was devastating and heart-wrenching to witness the fear that it created in our community. Fear that law enforcement was synonymous with ICE, fear that reporting crimes would result in getting deported, fear that individuals would be separated from their families. For many of the people walking through our door, the possibility of getting caught by the deportation dragnet was scarier than being a victim of a crime. They came to us for help because they did not know where else to go.

No one should fear those that are there to protect them in the first place. The residents of Connecticut deserve better than that. We do not stand alone in recognizing that the S-Comm program is bad policy. New York City, Washington D.C., Cook County, IL, Santa Clara have all created policies or laws that limit compliance. The Department of Corrections in Connecticut has also recognized the need to protect its residents by passing protocols to limit compliance with the program. It is time that all law enforcement in Connecticut follows this practice. That is why today I urge you to pass H.B. 6659, a bill that will restore our community's trust.

Thank you for your time.