

Dear Senators Coleman and Fox,

I am writing in strong support of RB6659 - An Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers and urge your committee to approve this legislation. I am unable to attend Friday's hearing so am submitting this written testimony to which I have attached a Faith Matters article I wrote last month for the New Haven Register. In that article I express my support for the Trust act, encouraging others to support it as well. It will be a critical and much needed corrective to the injurious consequences of the so-called "Secure Communities" program which wrongly, in my opinion, presses local police departments and court marshals to engage in the work of immigration enforcement. It also does the opposite of securing our communities, creating instead a climate of mistrust and fear between residents and local police.

In the New Haven Register article, I wrote:

"In the spirit of a "great fellowship of love," a group of Yale Divinity Students, Seminarians for a Democratic Society, have a proposal this year for those of us who practice the Lenten discipline of giving something up. They are proposing that we give up borders, that we declare the season of Lent to be a "season without borders."

Specifically, they are urging us to contest a Department of Homeland Security program, called (with no sense of irony) 'Secure Communities.' Under that Federal program, which mandates immigration checks of everybody booked in local jails, over 400 Connecticut residents, most with no criminal record, have been deported, wrenching parents from children and tearing apart families.

In a Declaration entitled Lent Without Borders, these students are calling people of faith and justice to "dare to imagine and declare publicly that a world without borders is not only possible but is demanded by a faith that declares we are all 'strangers and aliens in the world' (1 Peter 2:11)." Specifically, the Declaration urges us to advocate at the CT State Legislature for the passage of the Trust Act. Trust Act legislation allows local police departments to release people who have been arrested once their bond is posted or their sentence is up as long as they have no serious convictions rather than detain them at the behest of Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

All of us in this country (with the exception of native, indigenous Americans) are immigrants, and while by current US laws some are considered 'illegal' because of their documentation, the issue of immigration reform needs to be addressed at the Federal level. It is a mistake and an injustice to try to enforce immigration by pressing local enforcement agents to become in effect an arm of ICE. Such practices are corrosive to local communities.

I urge you and your committee members to approve RB 6659 - Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers so trust can be restored to our communities. I hope and pray that this legislation will then be passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. I urge you to do all you can to accomplish that.

Gratefully and sincerely,

Allie Perry

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