

Connecticut Communist Party USA

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Judiciary Committee

Testimony, Monday, March 30, 2015

Joelle Fishman, Connecticut Communist Party USA

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, members of the Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is in support of HB 7039, An Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers.

I have had the privilege of working with Unidad Latina en Accion, an immigrant rights organization in New Haven which has intervened on behalf of countless families to stop wrongful deportations that separate children and parents and needlessly destroy lives and communities.

We should all appreciate the significant contribution to our state made by those courageous immigrant families who have stepped forward to make their stories known and stop unjust deportation proceedings.

The Connecticut General Assembly took a big step by enacting the Trust Act two years ago. Having experienced the implementation of the Act, it has become clear that in order for its intent to be fulfilled improvements in the language need to be made.

The goal of this bill is a complete separation between local law enforcement and ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement), as recommended by President Obama's task force on 21st century policing.

The delayed implementation of President Obama's executive order expanding DACA/DAPA adds to the urgency of improving the language in the Trust Act here in Connecticut. One recent example is the case of Pedro Lineras who is eligible for DAPA, yet whose deportation away from his family was averted only by community intervention.

In addition to stopping unnecessary and harmful deportations, separation between local law enforcement and ICE is a boost to public safety and fairness. It allows immigrants to relate to the police in their neighborhoods without fear of deportation, and puts a brake on racial profiling.

The policies adopted by the East Haven Police Department following the investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice into profiling and civil rights abuses of the immigrant community is now the strongest in our state. Improving the Trust Act would enable these policies to be expanded state-wide to the benefit of all communities.

Enactment of HB 7039 will improve law enforcement in Connecticut, restore trust between police and the community, provide clarity and consistency to law enforcement officers, and prevent unconstitutional detentions and racial profiling.

Your support will continue and strengthen policies of fairness and justice to which our state is already committed.