



Over 45 years advocating for the New Haven community.  
169 Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513  
203.787.0191 [www.juntainc.org](http://www.juntainc.org)

March 30, 2015

Testimony in Support of HB 7039

Co-chairs Coleman and Tong and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee in favor of HB 7039, which will update the TRUST Act that the Connecticut General Assembly passed unanimously in 2013. Like the legislation from 2013, HB 7039 will advance public safety by strengthening the trust between immigrant communities and local police.

For over a decade, The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been eroding this trust through programs and policies with deceptively crafted names like “Secure Communities” (S-Comm). Despite ICE’s attempts to mislead state and local law enforcement, elected officials, and other policy makers, we know that their primary concern is not securing our communities. Their goal is to fill quotas for detainees in custody and detainees removed from the country.

ICE has a history of relying on state and local law enforcement to do their job for them. The 287 (g) Program, now being phased out, allowed DHS to deputize local police officers to serve as immigration agents. Secure Communities allows for ICE to share information with local law enforcement. ICE then issues “detainers” so that local jails will hold individuals an additional forty-eight hours beyond when they should normally be released. Finally, the latest ICE program, called Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), will encourage local police and probation officers to notify ICE when an undocumented immigrant will be released from custody.

ICE would much rather rely on state and local authorities to do its job. After all, the alternative is usually heavy-handed worksite raids and sweeps of neighborhoods that generate more public backlash, such as the 2007 raid in New Haven in which ICE retaliated for the City of New Haven passing the ground breaking Elm City ID card program. DHS later settled a civil rights lawsuit, which awarded \$350,000 for the victims of this raid, who were defended by the WIRAC Clinic at Yale Law School. These types of raids—when ICE agents regularly force entry into families’ homes with assault rifles raised and complete disregard for the presence of children—these raids show the true nature of what ICE is doing to our communities.

As ICE adapts its tactics to evade positive policies like the TRUST Act and similar measures passed by a growing list of states and localities, it is important that we also revisit and strengthen our laws to protect our communities from the devastating effects of deportation and family separation.

In fact, our state has already begun taking steps to do just that. Last year, Governor Malloy announced that Department of Corrections (DOC) would no longer enforce ICE detainer requests solely on the basis of a final order of deportation unless accompanied by judicial warrant, nor solely on the basis of a past non-violent felony conviction. Also, as a result of a lawsuit settlement, the town of East Haven now has one of the strongest of such policies in the entire country. However, as these policies do not carry the force of law, they are limited in their reach. HB 7039 would allow us to have a uniform policy across the state, and would provide residents of all Connecticut’s towns and cities the same protections.

It is in our interest as a state to foster an environment in which all communities, regardless of income levels, race, or immigration status, can respect and trust local police. HB 7039 offers the opportunity to build on the positive momentum created when Connecticut made history by being the first state to pass the TRUST Act, limiting the reach of ICE detainers in the state. There is no question that repairing and strengthening this trust will take time. Recent data indicate we're on the right track, and I urge this committee to take the opportunity to continue this trend by supporting this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NT', with a horizontal line underneath.

Nick Torres  
Director of Advocacy