

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

To the members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 7039 - an act concerning civil immigration detainers. I am an immigration attorney, practicing in connecticut since 2011, a member of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, an immigrant's rights advocate, and an immigrant who has personally witnessed the effects of our broken immigration system.

I support HB 7039 because it would prevent local law enforcement from notifying ICE when releasing people from custody, an act which has resulted in a lack of trust between police and the communities they serve. I see it everyday with my client's when they tell me that they would rather not report crimes than risk being taken into custody. For them it is a very real possibility that they could end up in custody and be taken away from their small children (many who are US citizens) or that they could lose their jobs (through which they pay taxes in our local communities) or their homes (which they also pay property taxes for and which helps provide the local services we all rely on in our daily lives).

The law would also prevent local law enforcement from honoring any ICE detainer request, since such detentions are unconstitutional and lead to the needless incarceration of people who are not a risk to our public safety or who can otherwise be detained beyond immigrants being detained in state custody longer than allowed under the law. This is a clear violation of our constitutional principles and we should continue to amend the law so that we can prevent all sharing of information with DHS-ICE. In fact the federal government has recognized, after long and costly litigation that these Federal-Local programs are more problematic than beneficial. See the November 20, 2014 DHS Memo on Discontinuing Secure Communities.

Finally I think it is incumbent upon our State legislators to protect Connecticut residents to the full extent of the law. Our State is a leader in protecting all of its residents regardless of immigration status because we recognize that we are dealing with members of our communities. Therefore, I urge you to make this version of the law as strong as possible and to effectively stop all cooperation with the federal government until such time as there is a sensible immigration policy. The trust between the local police and community is essential to our society and must be protected even in the face of pressure from the federal government.

Submitted By:

Rafael R. Pichardo
Attorney At Law
Immigrant Legal Assistance, LLC
110 Airport Road, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06114
Phone: (860) 578-4152
Fax: (860) 760-6992
Email: Rafael.Pichardo@il-act.com