



Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 388

The Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association writes to provide enthusiastic support for House Bill 388, Criminal Procedure - Civil Immigration Enforcement - Restrictions.

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The Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association, or HNLEA, is a nonprofit association of Latino & minority law enforcement professionals involved in the administration of justice and dedicated to the advancement of Hispanic and minority interests in the law enforcement profession. HNLEA is associated with the United Black Police Officers Association.

HNLEA seeks to unify Hispanic and minority law enforcement employees in all communities throughout the United States by serving as positive liaisons between the Latino and minority officers and the community. In Maryland, HNLEA members include officers and management in local and county police departments, officers in state law enforcement, and more.

HNLEA supports the Civil Immigration Enforcement - Restrictions Act because of the unique role its members play on a daily basis in facilitating positive relationships between the Latin American community and police departments.

Collaboration between law enforcement and immigration has created unprecedented levels of fear in immigrant communities across the United States and in Maryland.

The reputation of Secure Communities, the most notorious and common of these programs, has been battered by stories of innocent community members caught in its gripes. Several prominent cases in Maryland have received significant English and Spanish media coverage and have included cases of a woman put into the deportation pipeline after calling for assistance with domestic violence.

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From a community policing perspective, each one of these cases undermines the enormous strides that have been made in expanding the trust of the immigrant community in the police. Secure Communities, and other enforcement programs, are particularly pernicious because, from the public's perspective, immigration enforcement is initiated by the local police.

Each HNLEA member is familiar with a case where the fear of the police undermined the willingness of a witness to come forward, caused a perpetrator to flee detection transforming a relatively minor infraction into something much more serious, or a victim who would not press charges because of concerns about the immigration consequences for themselves and for a perpetrator.

These cases quite literally undermine the capacity of HNLEA members to perform our work. For many of our members, we are the responsible officers in our department for facilitating the communication of Spanish-speaking immigrants, investigating crimes in immigrant communities, and responding to community concerns about police/resident interactions. Our capacity to effectively perform these duties is made significantly more difficult because of policies like Secure Communities.

And, we believe, that the damage to community policing results in greater levels of crime in the communities that we love and protect. If residents do not trust their local police, they are less willing to step forward as witnesses to or victims of crime. This has an impact on everyone. Any resident too scared to call police if they see suspicious activity undermines everyone's safety.

Passage of the Maryland, Civil Immigration Enforcement - Restrictions would put sufficient protections into place to ensure that the important roles of both law enforcement and immigration are respected. It will allow immigration officials to perform their work without undermining the faith of residents in their local police. HNLEA urges a positive report on House Bill 388.