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February 13, 2018

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the nation's 19,000 cities and towns represented by the National League of Cities (NLC), I am writing to express our strong opposition to any amendment to the immigration reform legislation that is currently under consideration on the Senate floor that would withhold federal funding from so-called "sanctuary cities." Legislative proposals that withhold critical funding from cities would not only impose unjustified federal sanctions on local governments, but also would punish millions of voters and taxpayers that live and work in those cities.

NLC is pleased that the Senate is moving forward this week with a debate on immigration reform. We strongly support a bipartisan approach to comprehensive immigration reform that includes stronger border enforcement as well as components of the DREAM Act, allowing undocumented workers who came to our country as children a path towards permanent legal status and eventually U.S. citizenship. The economic impact of immigrants is felt in cities large and small, urban and rural across our great country and we look forward to a solution that provides safety and prosperity for all.

However, we believe that any amendment to the immigration reform legislation which attempts to shift the federal responsibility of enforcing federal immigration laws to local governments is an unfunded mandate that diverts critical resources from local government agencies, compromises public safety, and hinders local efforts to work with immigrant communities to improve public safety and increase economic prosperity of our cities.

NLC has consistently opposed federal efforts that would impose harmful sanctions on local governments that have in effect a statute, ordinance, policy, or practice that that limits the role of local law enforcement in enforcing federal immigration laws. Specifically, NLC has significant concerns with federal legislative efforts that:

1. undermine local government's authority to govern their public safety and local law enforcement programs;
2. strip local government's ability to enact common-sense crime prevention policies;
3. coerce local law enforcement to honor Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) administrative detainer requests, even though the federal courts have determined that the use ICE detainers violates the Fourth Amendment, and that localities may be held liable for honoring them;

4. impose an unfunded mandate to local governments by requiring them to cover the costs associated with detaining the undocumented immigrants; and
5. compel local governments to utilize their local law enforcement resources to support federal civil immigration enforcement, which is a violation of the Tenth Amendment's "commandeering" principle.

Instead of trying to coerce cities and towns to enforce the broken immigration laws of the United States, Congress should continue to focus its attention on passing immigration reform legislation that creates a process whereby undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States may earn legalized status through payment of appropriate fees and back taxes, background checks, the absence of criminal or gang activity, consistent work history, and meeting English and civics requirements.

We urge Congress to avoid taking any precipitous action that undermines how mayors and city councils run their local governments. The solution to fixing the nation's immigration laws should not look to divide America, but instead make our federal immigration system stronger and fair to all.

Sincerely,



Mark Stodola
President, National League of Cities
Mayor, Little Rock, Arkansas



Clarence E. Anthony
CEO & Executive Director
National League of Cities