



Testimony in support of
H.3573/S.1401
An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
By Jennifer Muroff, LWVMA Immigration Specialist
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All persons should receive fair treatment under the law. Even though the federal government treats immigrants and refugees inhumanely and refuses to act sensibly and fairly on immigration, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all residents, regardless of their immigration status. The League of Women Voters supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment.

This bill, known as the Safe Communities Act, will ensure both fair treatment of undocumented people and public safety by putting the following protections in place:

- Ensures police and court officials do not inquire about immigration status unless required to do so by law.
- Protects basic rights by ensuring that people in police custody are made aware of their rights and consent to questioning before Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) interviews.
- Creates guidelines limiting when law enforcement and court officials can notify ICE of someone's impending release from custody, such as when a charge is dismissed or a person is released on bail.
- Prevents contracts with ICE that allow county sheriffs and the Department of Corrections to act as federal immigration agents, at taxpayers' expense.

Undocumented people are our neighbors, friends, classmates, and family members. They clean our homes, care for our children, and serve our food. They are students in our schools and universities. The 175,241 undocumented people living in Massachusetts pay \$207.9 million in state and local taxes; 88% are of working age and have \$4.3 billion in spending power.¹

No one should have to live in a constant state of fear of deportation and family separation. Medical providers and domestic violence advocates have testified to this committee that undocumented people are unwilling to report domestic abuse, wage theft, or seek medical

¹ The Partnership for a New American Economy, 2019. *Immigrants in the Economy in Massachusetts*.
<http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/massachusetts/>



treatment for life-threatening conditions due to fear of deportation. This fear of reporting and treatment has reached the level of a public health crisis in Massachusetts.²

Many local police chiefs set stellar examples of community policing. They do not wish to get involved with ICE for routine traffic stops and do not question people regarding their immigration status. LWVMA believes, however, that we need a uniform statewide policy to ensure civil rights are protected for all, so residents feel safe calling 911 regardless of where they reside or where they work. We need this bill.

The League of Women Voters is opposed to deportation of non-criminal undocumented immigrants. The League supports cities, towns, counties and states that decide not to cooperate with federal deportation and enforcement actions that include non-criminal undocumented immigrants. The League opposes the deputization of state and local police to enforce immigration laws in Massachusetts.

LWVMA, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, and the national League of Women Voters affirm that it is the responsibility of all levels of government to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States, regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability—or immigration status. The League stands in solidarity with immigrants and our partners in the immigrant rights community.

For all these reasons, LWVMA supports H.3573/S.1401 and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

² Doctors: Immigration crackdown raising health care concerns, *Commonwealth Magazine*, Sarah Betancourt, 9/18/2019.