



Testimony Submitted to the Joint Committee on Judiciary
In support of H.1401/S.997 An Act relative to Massachusetts state sovereignty
By Amy Cooper, LWVMA Immigration Specialist
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Massachusetts officials should not be carrying out federal immigration law enforcement, nor should local resources be used for this purpose. H.1401/S.997 would end this kind of collaboration.

The bill would end all detention agreements with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), which deputize local, county, and state authorities to enforce federal immigration law, and IGSA agreements (Intergovernmental Service Agreements), which allow sheriffs to rent a section of their jails to house immigrant detainees. Such agreements would end 90 days after enactment of the bill. Currently, whether or not these agreements get signed is entirely up to the sheriff, with no state oversight. This bill requires that, going forward, any such agreement that a sheriff might want to sign would have to first be approved by the Governor.

Most sheriffs do not wish to get involved with ICE and do not question people regarding their immigration status. In fact, the tide is shifting away from agreements that deputize local law enforcement officials to act as enforcers of federal immigration law. Right now, the only 287(g) agreement is between ICE and the Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC). In the past couple of years, Plymouth County and Barnstable County ended theirs. In Bristol County, their 287(g) agreement was terminated by the Biden Administration due to human rights abuses. LWVMA believes, however, that we need a uniform statewide policy that prevents the renewal or the introduction of new detention agreements in the future. By ending such agreements, this bill would help protect immigrant families from the harsh consequences that can result from even a minor interaction with immigration officials...detention, deportation, family separation.

The national League of Women Voters supports cities, towns, counties, and states that decide not to cooperate with federal enforcement and deportation actions that include noncriminal unauthorized immigrants. The Massachusetts League opposes the deputizing of state and local police to enforce immigration laws in Massachusetts.

LWVMA, representing 44 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, believes that no one should live in fear of deportation and family separation. We believe that federal immigration law enforcement should be disentangled from state and local law. We stand in solidarity with immigrants and our partners in the immigrants' rights community.

For all these reasons, LWVMA supports H.1401/S.997 and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.