



**Testimony Submitted to the
Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
In support of H.2288/S.1510 *An Act to Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of all
Massachusetts Residents*
By Amy Cooper, LWVMA Immigration Specialist
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All persons should receive fair treatment under the law. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a responsibility to ensure the safety and civil rights of all residents, regardless of their immigration status.

The Safe Communities Act, H.2288 /S.1510, would protect the civil rights of all state residents by making sure immigrants are offered due process rights, and local resources are not used for enforcing federal immigration law. It disentangles federal immigration enforcement from state and local law enforcement.

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 will help provide both fair treatment of people without legal status 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.

There are well over 200,000 undocumented people in Massachusetts and the number is rapidly growing. These immigrants are an integral part of our communities. They are our neighbors, friends, classmates, and family members. They are students in our schools and universities. They are businesses owners, and they make vital contributions in many fields, including health services, science, and service industries. It is estimated that they pay over \$200 million in state and local taxes and over \$500 million in federal taxes. Their total spending power in the Commonwealth is more than \$4 billion.

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 treatment for life-threatening conditions due to fear of deportation.

Many local police chiefs are 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. Most police chiefs want to build trust with everyone in their communities so that victims can feel comfortable reporting crimes. LWVMA believes, however, that we need a uniform statewide policy to ensure civil rights are protected for all, so that residents feel safe calling 911 or accessing medical care, regardless of where they reside or where they work.

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

LWVMA, representing 43 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 immigrants' rights community.

For all these reasons, LWVMA supports H.2288/S.1510 and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.