



Opposition to SB 8 / HB 5580

Luis Figueroa, Chief of Legislative Affairs, Every Texan

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Chair and Members of the Committee,

Every Texan strongly opposes SB 8 and HB 5580. These bills represent a dangerous encroachment on local governance and public safety by mandating municipal cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). If enacted, these bills would transform what has historically been a voluntary and context-dependent arrangement into a compulsory one, blurring the lines between state and federal jurisdiction, undermining the trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

SB 8 and HB 5580 would force local law enforcement agencies to engage in immigration enforcement, regardless of the needs, values, or safety concerns of their communities. In doing so, the bills effectively strip local governments of their ability to govern according to the best interests of their constituents, sowing confusion about the role of local police and turning community officers into de facto federal agents. As El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles has emphasized, "local law enforcement should not be involved in immigration enforcement," noting that it would "deter crime victims and witnesses from cooperating with investigations" and place additional burdens on local agencies unprepared for such responsibilities.

One of the hallmarks of an effective law enforcement agency is the cultivation of strong, trusting relationships with community members. These relationships are built on years of communication, presence, and mutual understanding. When residents believe that reporting a crime or cooperating with police could lead to deportation or family separation, they are significantly less likely to come forward. This climate of fear ultimately hinders law enforcement's ability to solve crimes, protect victims, and build safer neighborhoods. Former Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo expressed similar concerns in his testimony before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, warning that laws compelling local ICE cooperation "breed fear, erode trust, and make everyone less safe".

Moreover, compelling local police departments to cooperate with ICE risks deepening the already damaging effects of over-policing, especially in Black, Latino, immigrant, and low-income communities. These communities already suffer from disproportionate surveillance and criminalization and forcing ICE cooperation into routine policing duties will only increase the likelihood of racial profiling, civil rights violations, and unnecessary detentions, again acting against public safety. The Texas Department of Public Safety has already issued internal directives explicitly encouraging immigration enforcement in partnership with federal agencies, raising serious concerns about institutional overreach and the militarization of local policing.

Local leaders know their communities best. Forcing municipalities to conform to a one-size-fits-all mandate ignores the diverse realities in cities and counties across Texas. Whether urban or rural, border or inland, local governments should retain the right to decide how they allocate law enforcement resources, especially when those decisions impact the safety and trust of their communities.

These bills do not make Texas safer. They make our communities more vulnerable, our law enforcement less effective, and our democracy less accountable to the people it serves. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to vote against SB 8 and HB 5580.