

NYS Interfaith Network for Immigration Reform

March 31, 2011

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As leaders of diverse faith communities in New York, we are writing to express our disappointment that New York State is continuing its participation in the federal immigration enforcement program, Secure Communities (S-Comm). We ask that you rescind the Memorandum of Agreement between the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding the S-Comm program. New York's continued involvement in this program puts the public welfare, families, community safety, and civil rights at risk, and betrays the fundamental values of our state and nation.

We are concerned about S-Comm for the following reasons:

- S-Comm is inimical to the public welfare. During this time of budget crisis, S-Comm uses scarce local funds to shoulder federal responsibility instead of toward the urgent and important law enforcement needs of our communities. **The greatness of New York lies in its tradition of putting the public welfare first. S-Comm betrays this tradition.**
- S-Comm will separate families. Under S-Comm, ICE will put people suspected of being deportable directly into the detention and deportation system, separating them from their families. Locked up in detention centers in remote locations, immigrants have severely limited access to their loved ones and, frequently, to legal services. Far too often, deportation is the outcome, resulting in divided families and shattered lives. **New York's tradition of protecting families and children is one root of its greatness. S-Comm betrays this tradition.**
- S-Comm damages the relationship between communities and local law enforcement agencies, putting the safety of communities at risk. Concerns about

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police enforcement of immigration law will prevent victims and witnesses of crime from reporting offenses, putting vulnerable members of communities in jeopardy. **New York's tradition of ensuring the safety and security of all is one root of its greatness. S-Comm betrays this tradition.**

- In this merger of the federal immigration and local criminal justice systems, non-citizens are channeled into detention and deportation through reliance on a criminal justice system often characterized by racial profiling and racially biased policing. **The embrace of tolerance and the rejection of racial and ethnic stereotyping are one root of New York's greatness. S-Comm leads to a betrayal of these values.**

We, the undersigned, ask for your leadership in ending New York's participation in S-Comm. The shared values of our diverse faith communities, our state and our nation at large require it, and the welfare of immigrants, families and children - indeed, of all New Yorkers - hang in the balance.

Sincerely,

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