

Press Statement
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New York Elected Officials and Advocates Lambast ICE's Alleged Improvements to "Secure Communities" Deportation Program

New York, NY (June 1, 2011) – A wide coalition of immigrant advocacy groups, joined by prominent elected officials, today reacted with discontent, anger, and frustration at Immigration and Customs Enforcement's announcement about alleged improvements to the mass deportation program known as "Secure Communities." Particularly as the Inspector General plans an investigation into the program, advocates protested against the surface-level modifications that ICE proposed and called for a national end to Secure Communities.

"Today we have the first recognition from ICE that Secure Communities has flaws, but unfortunately they don't recognize the depth and seriousness of the problems," said U.S. Congressman José E. Serrano. "Instead of ignoring legitimate criticisms and papering over the problems, ICE should shut Secure Communities down. It's time to end the unfair and counterproductive deportations that are tearing families and communities apart."

"It is good news that ICE Secretary Morton understands that the controversial Secure Communities program has not fulfilled its mission. However, I am anxious for the Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General to begin a thorough internal investigation into the program and will expect to see more serious actions taken in the future," stated New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera. "In the meantime, I believe we must suspend Secure Communities at a national level because this program is continuing to separate families and make victims of domestic abuse, as well as witnesses and other victims of crime, afraid to go to the police by causing fears about triggering deportation."

"Nothing short of a full stop to Secure Communities is acceptable," said Michelle Fei of the Immigrant Defense Project. "States across the country have already made clear that they do not want anything at all to do with this irreparable program. ICE's empty promises about making minor improvements fail to change the fact that Secure Communities simply serves as a dragnet into the unjust deportation system."

"After repeated lies and deception about Secure Communities, there is nothing that ICE can now say that would change the correct decision that New York, Illinois, and Massachusetts have made to not participate in this destructive program," said Mizue Aizeki of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights. "Until we fix our fundamentally flawed deportation system, we need a nationwide end to Secure Communities, not cosmetic fixes."

"No commission, carve out, or other so-called reform will solve the problems posed by letting police act as immigration agents," stated Sunita Patel, Staff Attorney, Center for Constitutional Rights. "States should stand strong to protect the rights of their residents."

The federal government cannot constitutionally commandeer local police to enforce our flawed immigration laws.”

“Our communities will not be fooled by ICE,” said Manisha Vaze of Families for Freedom. “We know that these superficial adjustments still allow Secure Communities to make us all less safe, encourage racial profiling, and violate our rights.”

“Tweaking Secure Communities is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic,” said New York Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Donna Lieberman. “S-Comm tears families apart, invites racial profiling and creates distrust between police and immigrant communities. You can’t fix something that is fundamentally broken.”

“ICE has done enough damage to our communities,” said Ana Maria Archila, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York. “We cannot stand for anything less than a full end to Secure Communities. Latinos across the country represent a large and growing community that has seen the perverse effects of this deportation strategy. We will not rest until Obama does the right thing.”

“Our families and friends are getting torn apart from us daily,” said Ravi Ragbir of the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York. “Because we are called upon to protect our brothers and sisters, we denounce Secure Communities and any of its modifications.”

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The New York State Working Group Against Deportation is a broad coalition of domestic violence, immigrant rights, family services, labor, faith-based, civil rights, and community-based organizations that aims to stop Secure Communities and other deportation programs. Contact Michelle Fei (mfei@immigrantdefenseproject.org; (484) 464-3664) or Mizue Aizeki (mizueki@nmcir.org) for more information about S-Comm and the successful campaign to stop S-Comm in New York.