

Statement of the Tahirih Justice Center
Opposing the
“No Sanctuary for Criminals Act” (H.R. 3003) and “Kate’s Law” (H.R. 3004)
June 27, 2017

The Tahirih Justice Center (“Tahirih”) respectfully submits this statement to the United States House of Representatives as it considers “The No Sanctuary for Criminals Act” (H.R. 3003; “The Act”) and “Kate’s Law” (H.R. 3004). The House Rules Committee is set to review these bills today, followed by the full House in the near future. Tahirih is a national, nonpartisan organization that has assisted over 20,000 immigrant survivors of gender-based violence over the past 20 years. Our clients include women and girls who have endured horrific abuses such as rape and human trafficking and are in dire need of humanitarian relief.

Tahirih urges members of Congress to oppose H.R. 3003 and 3004:

- **By further entangling federal and local immigration enforcement, H.R. 3003 will not only put survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence at greater risk of harm, but will embolden violent criminals who pose a danger to us all.**
- **H.R. 3004 will unjustly punish asylum seekers who sought safe haven in the U.S., but were improperly denied access to the asylum process the first time around.**

H.R. 3003: The No Sanctuary for Criminals Act

The Act seeks to erase the distinction between federal and local immigration enforcement. Such measures erode immigrant community trust of police, who rely on victims and witnesses to help get dangerous criminals off the streets. When immigrants know they can call 911 without fear of deportation, it is perpetrators – not victims or their children – that are deterred and punished. Abusers and traffickers deliberately manipulate and isolate victims to limit their access to information about their legal rights. Despite longstanding protections under the Violence Against Women Act, even victims who hold lawful immigration status succumb to intimidation, and remain afraid of deportation if they come forward. For some survivors, deportation means sentencing a US citizen child to the custody of a violent abuser. Following the recent passage of a state law to increase local immigration enforcement, a client aptly noted, *“This is exactly what [my abuser] has been waiting for.”* We are all less safe when we make it easier for perpetrators to commit crimes.

The Act will also increase prolonged detention of survivors, resulting in further traumatization, separation from young children, and limited access to legal assistance and due process. The Act also punishes localities that refuse to comply, by revoking critical funding for core programs that address gun violence, gang violence, and other criminal activity. When local agencies must “choose” between continuing these programs and compromising community trust, it is the public that pays the steepest price.

H.R. 3004: Kate's Law

Tahirih and other advocates routinely assist clients whose initial requests for asylum at the border are met with hostility, intimidation, and coercion. These individuals are unlawfully denied access to the asylum process by U.S. officials. With their lives in grave danger, women and girls in this situation have no choice but to request safe haven in the U.S. a second or even third time. They are not asking to appeal denial of their claims; rather, they are merely seeking a *threshold* determination that they may *apply* for asylum or related protections. Our domestic laws and international humanitarian obligations require that they have this opportunity. H.R. 3004 will punish women fleeing horrific abuse who persist in their quest for asylum by limiting their ability to challenge initial, unlawful removals, and by unnecessarily and unjustly subjecting them to criminal prosecution.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer this statement in opposition to H.R. 3003 and 3004, and we urge Congress to unequivocally reject these harmful bills that undermine the safety of survivors of gender-based violence.



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