

Statement of Principles

Promoting Public Safety by Ensuring Access to Police Protection for Immigrant Women and Girls

- **We Are All Safer When Immigrants Trust Police.** Local law enforcement relies on immigrant victims and witnesses for firsthand information to help get violent criminals off the streets. When immigrants know they can call 911 without fear of deportation, it is dangerous perpetrators – not victims or their children – that are deterred and punished. Federal immigration and local law enforcement functions should remain separate to preserve community trust.
- **Deterring Immigrants from Reporting Crime has Unintended Consequences.** Survivors with U.S. citizen children might remain in an abusive situation because they fear separation from their young children and forced relinquishment of custody to the abuser upon deportation. This false “choice” is particularly tragic where a survivor unknowingly holds or is eligible for lawful status.
- **Maximizing Public Safety is a Nonpartisan Issue.** Just like so-called “sanctuary” policies, the Violence Against Women Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act are designed to encourage immigrant survivors of horrific crimes such as domestic violence and human trafficking to call 911. These laws enjoy longstanding and broad bipartisan support because they are known to help police effectively protect and serve the public.
- **Punishing Localities For Protecting Immigrant Crime Victims Endangers Public Safety.** Funding for programs that address gun violence, gang violence, and other criminal activity is essential to ensure police effectiveness. When local agencies must “choose” between continuing these programs and compromising community trust, the public pays a steep price.
- **Efforts to Exempt Victims and Witnesses from Local Immigration Enforcement Fall Short.** Well-meaning efforts to exempt victims from immigration status inquiries by local police fail to address the unique dynamics of domestic violence and human trafficking. Survivors often face criminal charges when acting in self-defense or if abusers retaliate by filing false charges against them. Yet, exemptions do not typically protect victims who are accused of crimes. These exemptions are also insufficient to quell the sweeping, chilling effect that punitive policies have on entire immigrant communities.
- **Lawmakers and the Public Must Diligently Educate Themselves.** Misperceptions about so-called “sanctuary” policies abound. These policies can never immunize an individual from prosecution for a federal immigration violation, nor do they exempt immigrants from state criminal prosecution. A thorough, research and evidence-based understanding of the range of impacts of these policies is critical to ensuring sound laws and policies.

Tahirih Justice Center

6402 Arlington Blvd, Suite 300 | Falls Church, VA 22042
(p) 571-282-6161 | (f) 571-282-6162 | justice@tahirih.org
www.tahirih.org