

I am writing in support of HB 0444, ending immigration enforcement agreements with state and local law enforcement, state or local agencies and employees. Thank you to the many delegates who sponsored this bill.

My grandfather and his brother came to this country in 1912 from a Russia where government sponsored gangs terrorized the local populace, primarily Jews, simply because they were Jews. These thugs didn't bother with masks because there was no constitution or law preventing them from stealing, raping or murdering Jews or anyone else. Jews in Russia always had to have papers ready, even into the 20th century. Their passports are labeled "Jew" which affects the jobs they can hold, the schools they can attend and the cities where they are allowed to live.

But we DO have laws in our country. Here, we do not have to show our papers, we are innocent until proven guilty, and we have the right to due process before we are imprisoned or deported, no matter who we are. In this country only Klansmen and thieves and murderers wear masks because they are committing criminal acts.

We are watching with our own eyes as masked men break car windows and drag innocent women and men away, knock down doors and force entry to private houses abducting entire families and even children without due process, at first under cover of night, but now in broad daylight. It is kidnapping and even murder in every sense of the word. We watch as our government tells us that what we have seen and heard did not really happen.

At the hospital where my husband (a child of immigrants) works, he sees almost no immigrants coming for medical help anymore. They are afraid to get the health care, both mental and physical, that they need. They are afraid to go to the store to buy food. They are afraid to send their children to school.

How do we benefit from this? Aside from the damage to our democracy and our humanity we are destroying family businesses, the health and education of innocent parents and the children who are our future. If nothing else, think about it selfishly. When a child of immigrants contracts a contagious illness, do you think it will stay in that community? It will affect you and your children. When you deny education to the populace, who will take care of you? Who will fill those jobs? Many of these people escaped horrific conditions, risking their lives to come here for a chance at safety and a better life, just like our forebears did. They are law abiding people, coming to court for immigration hearings, attending school, going to work, going about their lives just as we do.

ICE is not, at this time a law-abiding institution. Cooperation with their terrorist agenda would make us complicit in criminal behavior. Please pass HB 0444. Please end cooperation with these criminal thugs and restore our faith in our elected officials and at least our state government. Please vote for this bill and all the bills that would protect the immigrants who make our lives so much better. We were once immigrants, too.