May 15, 2018

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Governor of Tennessee
Office of Governor Bill Haslam
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Request for veto of HB 2315

Dear Governor Haslam:

We, the undersigned 74 domestic and sexual violence advocates and organizations, strongly urge you to veto HB 2315. This legislation would create a chilling effect for domestic violence survivors and other crime victims in the state of Tennessee, discouraging them from reporting crimes to local police for fear that they or their loved ones could end up detained or deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials.

HB 2315 would forbid the adoption of local policies that limit entanglement with federal immigration enforcement and require that all law enforcement officers inquire about immigration and citizenship status, on penalty of loss of economic and community development funds. By requiring local and state law enforcement to facilitate federal immigration enforcement, especially following the April 5th raid in Bean Station, this bill would send a clear message to Tennessee’s immigrant communities: “You can’t trust the police.”

As the federal government ramped up threats to detain and deport as many immigrants as possible in early 2017, police departments across the country saw pronounced drops in reporting of serious crime by Latino or Hispanic residents. The Houston Police Department found that in the first three months of 2017, rapes reported by Hispanics were down nearly 43 percent - and other violent crimes reported by Hispanics down 13 percent - when compared to the same period in 2016. The Los Angeles Police Department reported a 25 drop in sexual assault reports from Latinos in the first three months of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016. In Denver, crime reports from Latinos fell 12 percent in the first three months of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016. And an April 2017 survey of advocates and attorneys who work with domestic violence survivors across the country found that 78 percent of immigrant survivors told their agency that they have concerns about contacting the police.

We have every reason to believe that the increased entanglement with federal immigration enforcement required under HB 2315 would have a similar impact on crime-reporting by survivors and victims in cities and counties across Tennessee, leaving all of our communities less safe. In fact, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Attorneys General from several states, and law enforcement leaders from across the country have all adopted positions or policies opposing law enforcement entanglement with
immigration enforcement, on the ground that it harms public safety. These concerns were echoed by Tennessee law enforcement (see http://nashvillepublicradio.org/post/tennessee-sheriffs-fear-anti-sanctuary-cities-measure-could-upset-balance).

According to the Tahirih Justice Center, a national non-profit that works to prevent violence against immigrant women and girls, deterring immigrants from reporting crime can have unintended consequences for U.S. citizens as well. Survivors with U.S. citizen children might remain in abusive situations because they fear separation from their children and even forced loss of custody to their abuser upon deportation.

Policies that seek to distinguish the criminal law enforcement role of local police and sheriff’s departments from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s immigration enforcement functions are not only legal – they reflect local best practices for prioritizing safety for all communities. By contrast, measures such as HB 2315 undermine the very purpose of federal laws that aim to encourage crime victims and survivors to work with police.

This legislation would inappropriately overrule local decisions and the discretion of local law enforcement, at the cost of the safety and security of survivors of domestic violence and other crime victims. This is unacceptable. Please veto HB 2315.

Sincerely,

Lysette Aviles
President
East TN 4 PR
Knoxville, Tennessee

Jasmine Baptiste
Clinical Therapist
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Lisa Bass
Data Management Specialist
AAUW - Murfreesboro
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Megan Batista
Program Specialist
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence
Nashville, Tennessee
Myra Beasley  
Court Advocacy Supervisor  
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Center  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Bettie Beckwith  
Shelter Advocate  
Cannon County SAVE  
Woodbury, Tennessee

Alicia Bunch Vargas  
Bilingual Clinical Therapist  
Sexual Assault Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

Kristina Calvin  
Resource Specialist  
TN Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Nashville, Tennessee

Samantha Cantrell  
Immediate Past President  
AAUW of Tennessee  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Daryl Chansuthus  
Executive Director  
WRAP  
Jackson, Tennessee

Elena Cheney  
Rapid Rehousing Advocate  
BRIDGES Domestic Violence Center  
Franklin, Tennessee

Dia Cirillo  
President Elect  
AAUW of Tennessee  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Natasha Collins  
Women's Advocate  
Morning Star Sanctuary  
Nashville, Tennessee
Melissa Crabtree
Owner
Caught the Shot
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Alexandra Damiano
Clinical Therapist
The Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Olivia Darrow
Advocate
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Deborah Davis
Program Manager
Crime Victims Center/Rape Crisis Center
Memphis, Tennessee

Amy Dilworth
Executive Director
Knoxville Family Justice Center
Knoxville, Tennessee

Dr. Jackie Eller
AAUW
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Michael Francis
Nashville, Tennessee

Rachel Freeman
President
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Catherine Furbish
Clinical Therapist
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee
Carla Gibbs
Advocate
Avalon
Crossville, Tennessee

Sarahi Green
Court Advocate
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Kellee Halford
Clarksville, Tennessee

Megan Hart
Director
Tennessee Disability Pathfinder
Nashville, Tennessee

Vanessa Helbig
Girls Inc. Manager
YWCA Nashville & Middle TN
Nashville, Tennessee

Barbara Hessel
Bilingual Clinical Therapist
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Allison Hill
Training Specialist
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Renee Hurst
Board Member
SafeSpace of East Tennessee
Newport, Tennessee

Nancy James
Public Policy Chair
American Association for University Women
Lebanon, Tennessee
Cheyenne Jones  
Transitional Housing Coordinator  
Avalon Center  
Crossville, Tennessee

Daniel Jones  
Marketing & Branding Manager  
YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee  
Nashville, Tennessee

Shavonda Jones  
Director of Advocates  
Genesis House Inc  
Cookeville, Tennessee

Mary Mangum  
Victim Advocate  
Sexual Assault Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

Shavon Martin  
Legal Advocate  
Domestic Violence Program  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Shirley McClain  
Case Manager  
YWCA  
Memphis, Tennessee

Cathy McDonald  
Victim Advocate  
Haven of Hope, Inc  
Manchester, Tennessee

Natalie McMillan  
Food & Nutrition Coordinator  
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Center  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Heather Meshell  
Campaign Manager  
Nashville, Tennessee
Rachel Meyer
Sexual Assault Advocate and SART Coordinator
Avalon Center Inc
Crossville, Tennessee

Shawndell Miller
CFO
TN Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence
Nashville, Tennessee

Stephanie Morris
Staff Attorney
TN Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence
Nashville, Tennessee

Michelle Mowery Johnson
Director of Communications
YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee
Nashville, Tennessee

Allison Niffen
Sexual Assault Advocate
Haven of Hope
Fayetteville, Tennessee

Christine Parris
Residential Manager
Bridges Domestic Violence Center
Franklin, Tennessee

Wendy Paschall
Residential Coordinator/Advocate
WRAP (Wo/men's Resource and Rape Assistance Program)
Trenton, Tennessee

Lynn Pavleje
Residential Manager
Bridges Domestic Violence Center
Franklin, Tennessee

Lynn Pavleje
Residential Manager
Bridges Domestic Violence Center
Franklin, Tennessee
Melina Politte
Executive Director
Haven House
Alcoa, Tennessee

Kristin Pruitt
Professor Emerita, Christian Brothers University
AAUW
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Kristen Rector
CEO
Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee
Nashville, Tennessee

Corisa Ricciardi
Client Navigator
The Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Sharon Roberson
President & CEO
YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee
Nashville, Tennessee

Patricia Robledo
Knoxville, Tennessee

Erica Roe-Fehrman
Advocate
Bridges Domestic Violence Center
Franklin, Tennessee

Krissy Scruggs
Volunteer
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Nancy Seal
Victim's Advocate
CEASE, Inc.
Morristown, Tennessee
Emily Simpson
Clinical Therapist
Sexual Assault Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Loreal Stephens
Member
AAUW
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Mrs. Perian Strang
Nashville, Tennessee

Sarah Sutherland
Owner
Old Hat Co
Old Hickory, Tennessee

Peggy Swann
Public Policy Chair, AAUW of Tennessee
American Association of University Women
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Cheryl Torsney
Member
AAUW
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Kathy Walsh
Executive Director
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Nashville, Tennessee

Emily White
Domestic Violence Advocate
Avalon Center
Crossville, Tennessee

Georgie White
Roane Co Advocate
Avalon Center Inc
Crossville, Tennessee
Sue Fort White  
Executive Director  
Our Kids  
Nashville, Tennessee

Hallie Wiedner  
Volunteer  
Sexual Assault Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

Lisa Wise  
Advocate/SART Coordinator  
Sexual Assault Center  
Clarksville, Tennessee

Van Wolfe  
Executive Director  
SafeSpace  
Sevierville, Tennessee

Bianca Y  
Bilingual Clinical Therapist  
Sexual Assault Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

Mr. Dave Yoder  
Knoxville, Tennessee

Beatriz Zamora  
Legal Secretary  
TN Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Nashville, Tennessee

Signatories listed in individual capacity. Organizational affiliations listed for identification purposes only.