

May 14, 2018

Governor Bill Haslam
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Request to Veto HB 2315, the Mass Deportation Bill

Dear Honorable Governor Haslam:

We, the undersigned national civil rights organizations, urge you to veto HB 2315, an extreme anti-immigrant bill that damages the reputation of the State of Tennessee. By banning so-called “sanctuary cities” and turning local law enforcement into a mass deportation force, HB 2315 is one of the country's most extreme and anti-immigrant bills. The bill puts Tennessee on the frontlines of a divisive national debate and ahead in the race to the bottom for state anti-immigrant policies.

If HB 2315 were to become law, it would be an unnecessary black mark on the state, and represent a notable departure from the past eight years of effort promoting economic development and inclusion in your state.

Signing HB 2315 would make Tennessee a dangerous place for immigrant families and cement the state's reputation as hostile and unwelcoming to newcomers. Among other aspects, HB 2315 would bar all law enforcement agencies, even campus police, from adopting common-sense policies that limit officer inquiry about immigration and citizenship status, including in routine interactions with victims and witnesses to crime. HB 2315 will increase the already heightened fear that immigrants and their family members experience and make students and others less likely to report crimes.

HB2315 sets a dangerous precedent by severely restricting the ability of local police to make public safety decisions, and forcing local governments to bear the risk and expense of federal immigration enforcement. Changing state law to mandate that local law enforcement categorically comply with requests to detain from federal immigration agents, when courts across the country have found these detentions unconstitutional, puts local agencies in a double bind and makes Tennessee an outlier nationally.

We are alarmed and disappointed that legislators sided with the interests of the most extreme fringe of the electorate, rather than heed the concerns from local law enforcement, city and county officials, and others who voiced opposition to this anti-immigrant measure. HB 2315 and its broad impact do not reflect the values and sentiments of Tennessee voters as, according to [a recent NBC poll](#), six out of ten Tennesseans favor legalization over deportation for undocumented immigrants. Mass deportations run counter to the values of our nation.

The bill comes at a high-cost to immigrant families, public safety, local taxpayers, and your State's reputation. It will subject Tennessee to costly legal battles and economic backlash.

For these reasons, we urge you to veto this bill.

Signed,

Advancement Project
American Civil Liberties Union
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Center for Community Change
Church World Service
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
Southern Poverty Law Center
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Unidos US
United We Dream

CC: Dwight Tarwater, General Counsel
Todd Skelton, Deputy Counsel
Stephen M. Smith, Chief of Staff