



December 6, 2021

Senator Walter Timilty
Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety & Homeland Security
State House, Room 213-B
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Carlos Gonzalez
House Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety & Homeland Security
State House, Room 26
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Timilty, Chair Gonzalez, and esteemed Committee members,

My name is Nahma Nadich, and I am the Deputy Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC), a network of 41 organizations representing greater Boston's organized Jewish community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony **in strong support of H.2418/S.1579 *An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents.***

In January of 2017, drawing on our own community's history of seeking safe haven in this country as we fled persecution in earlier generations and in direct response to the previous President's executive orders vilifying immigrants and refugees, some 40 Boston Jewish religious, philanthropic, civic, and human service organizations united to publicly denounce these actions as unjust. We at JCRC organized a comprehensive network to support more than 800 local immigrants at risk of deportation - activating Jewish volunteers who provided court accompaniment, pro bono legal services and housing, and who raised bond funds for their release from detention.

Almost five years later, **we continue to stand together on the side of empathy and we urge compassion to those seeking safety, regardless of their faith or country of origin. Being fully welcoming of immigrants is not only about kindness to those who are vulnerable, but it is also good for our community, as we all benefit from the skills and talents these newcomers contribute to society.**

As you know, this comprehensive bill would end state and local participation in federal immigration enforcement and ensure the wise use of our public resources. We need to stop approaching these issues with the rhetoric of fear and demonization and with policies that treat

human beings around the world as a law enforcement problem. We believe that these issues must be approached as a humanitarian matter, with a commitment to the dignity and welfare of all peoples.

Specifically through the past two years over the course of the pandemic, policies of collaboration between local/State and Federal enforcement have deepened the distrust between immigrant communities and law enforcement, making members of our most vulnerable communities hesitant or afraid of seeking help, as we've witnessed firsthand in our work with immigrants at risk of deportation. When police and sheriffs become immigration agents, victims and witnesses of crime, including victims of domestic violence, do not come forward to work with law enforcement. When emergency rooms and hospitals are viewed with danger, people do not seek or receive the crucial care they need.

I would also like to briefly respond to concerns raised about crime levels among undocumented immigrants. Despite assertions that undocumented immigrants bring with them waves of violent crime, research has shown undocumented immigrants to be substantially less likely to commit crimes than their documented neighbors. In a 2020 study done in Texas, U.S.-born citizens were over 2 times more likely than undocumented immigrants to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes, and over 4 times more likely to be arrested for property crimes. Previous research in the field found similar results; across the board undocumented immigrants have lower rates of crime than their U.S.-born counterparts. It is also the sad truth that undocumented immigrants are also less likely to report crimes that they are victim to, leaving them more vulnerable to crimes of human trafficking, labor exploitation, and assault¹².

We urge you, our elected officials, to do everything in your authority to protect our foreign-born neighbors throughout the Commonwealth and ask for a swift and favorable report of this legislation.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Nahma Nadich
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¹ The Scholar: St. Mary's Law Review on Race and Social Justice, Vol. 20 [2018], No. 3, Art. 2 pg. 356

² Light, Michael T. 2020. "Comparing crime rates between undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, and native-born US citizens in Texas," PNAS