



August 15, 2011

DHS' DECISION TO UNILATERALLY MOVE FORWARD WITH SECURE COMMUNITIES PUTS WOMEN IN DANGER

Immigrant Rights and Women's Rights Groups Denounce the Decision Nationwide

On August 5th, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would unilaterally terminate all contracts with states and localities in an attempt to further implement the "Secure Communities" program nationwide, despite calls for the agency to suspend the program. Immigrant rights and women's rights organizations strongly oppose this unilateral decision by DHS, before the local hearings on Secure Communities' effects have even taken place. DHS' announcement demonstrates that the hearings are a farce, and that DHS is determined to implement Secure Communities, regardless of public opposition or its demonstrated impact on survivors of crime. We continue to oppose Secure Communities and any law that encourages ICE to transfer its responsibility to local law enforcement. Secure Communities undermines local law enforcement's commitment to community policing, which puts immigrant women, their families, and their communities in danger.

Since its introduction, the "Secure Communities" (abbreviated "S-Comm") program has been opposed by local and state civic leaders, elected officials, law enforcement agents, religious leaders, and human rights advocates. S-Comm forces local law enforcement agents to act as an arm of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by detaining persons who are arrested, but not charged with a crime, so that they can be processed for deportation. Since implementation began, more than one million people have been deported under S-Comm, the vast majority of whom have no criminal history, despite DHS' claims that the program targets individuals who are dangers to society. Instead, the program promotes racial profiling, destroys families, and undermines community relations with police that are essential to public safety. Continued ambiguity on the part of DHS regarding S-Comm has led to the Office of the Inspector General to initiate an audit into this controversial program.

S-Comm puts survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault at increased risk. It is threatening the progress our country has made in the last three decades to bring violence against women out from behind closed doors by making women afraid to call the police for help, for fear of arrest and deportation if they are undocumented. The program encourages violence against women and destroys the community trust in law

enforcement that is necessary for safe neighborhoods for all members of a community, regardless of immigration status.

Immigrant women are increasingly breadwinners and often provide more stability for their family. Yet they are criminalized, and sometimes brutalized, for trying to keep families safe and healthy. Immigrant mothers, who are simply working to make ends meet, are bearing the brunt of these anti-immigrant policies. They risk being arrested for walking their kids to school, they must worry about who will provide care for their children if they are suddenly detained or deported, and when families are indeed separated by deportation, the well-documented psychological effects on both parents and children continue to devastate families for years.

Immigrant communities and women's rights advocates are coming together to oppose the deeply problematic "Secure Communities" program. We pledge to speak out during DHS community hearings on S-Comm, and at other local, state and national public events. We urge local and state leaders to join us in declaring S-Comms unsafe for women and children.

ASISTA Immigration Assistance
Break the Chain Campaign
Casa de Esperanza
Ms. Foundation for Women
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Day Laborers Organizing Network
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Opportunity Agenda
Rights Working Group
STITCH
Third Wave Foundation