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Statehouse:
Office: (614) 466-5141
FAX: (614) 719-3956
Toll Free: 1-800-282-0253
Rep56@ohiohouse.gov

DAN RAMOS

State Representative
56th House District

State and Local Government Committee

House Bill 662 Testimony
Representative Dan Ramos
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Chairwoman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 662, legislation to affirm home rule for communities.

We have separation of powers in this country – there are responsibilities specifically tasked to each level within our federalist system. Enforcing immigration law is no different. The United States Supreme Court held in *Chy Lung v. Freeman*¹ all the way back in 1876 that immigration regulation was exclusively a federal matter. This legislation affirms home rule on the subject of immigration, thereby allowing our localities to remind the feds that immigration is legally their jurisdiction, and not the purview of local law enforcement.

That is important because Ohio's state and local law enforcement have better things to do. Working with federal partners is not up to our state or local governments to fund with Ohioans' hard-earned tax dollars. When Police are working on immigration, they're not solving crime; they're not preventing the next theft, they're not working on the heroin crisis, they're not protecting the population from the next violent crime.

We send more tax dollars to the federal government than they spend on us². It's not up to Ohioans to foot the bill for federal law enforcement, too, through our local and state law enforcement. That's why, from a practical standard many cities, have turned to Sanctuary status. Aside from being welcoming, aside from knowing that immigrants bring value to a community, those of us who work on budgets know this isn't a good use of our tax dollars. We already pay for federal law-enforcement as taxpayers. We don't need to do it twice.

Having a so-called "sanctuary city" status is actually good for a community. The likelihood of crime in sanctuary cities is much lower. In fact, sanctuary cities are actually safer, generally, according to an analysis of FBI data (Washington Post.)³

Police rely on communities – witnesses, informants – for information surrounding a crime. We have serious problems in this state and in this nation. Heroin, human trafficking, things we need our local law

¹ 92 U.S. 275 (1876)

² <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-most-least-dependent-on-the-federal-government/2700/>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/02/06/california-and-president-trump-are-going-to-war-with-each-other/?utm_term=.f489edb0ffec

enforcement to work on. They CANNOT do their jobs if whole communities, whole neighborhoods are afraid to talk to the police, if they see them as an enemy.

It is important to put yourself into the mindset of an immigrant. As has always been the case, immigrants from the same area tend to move into neighborhoods with people from a similar area. It allows for conversations in the native tongue both at home and at church, food from back home, and a feeling of community and belonging. In my hometown of Lorain, there are still vestiges of neighborhoods of immigrant Poles, Italians, Jews, Serbians, Germans, Greeks, Slovaks, Slovenians, Croats, etc. As has always been the case, there has never been any litmus test, any questions asked about documentation or lack thereof. You just knew your neighbor, Stanislaw, or Giancarlo, or Jose. Now imagine the police suddenly start rounding up your neighbors and friends. Do you call them if you see someone selling heroin across the street? If you see them selling human trafficking victims? If you see a violent crime, if you know that call may end up separating parents from children, husbands from wives that weren't involved in the first place? Of course you don't. You keep your head down, even if you are a documented immigrant, even if you are a citizen.

That leads to whole neighborhoods who can be preyed on by often American-born criminals, because they know no one will call the police. That, in turn, leads to more crime, more human trafficking, the rise of gangs. Mafia-style groups that will police the neighborhoods in their own way, if the real police can't. That's who folks will be forced to call, if anyone.

None of us knows each other's Districts like each of us who represents them. My City is called *The International City*. There has been a steady stream of immigrants from all over the world for 125 years, and we are better for it. I can't tell you if this is right for your communities. I can't tell you if your constituents would like to pay taxes to the feds, and then pay taxes to the state, their county, and city to do the feds job for them. I can tell you, though, that it should be up to the local community to decide at what level they have to cooperate with the federal government to do the feds job for them. Allowing communities to decide this does work. The immigrant community in my District does trust the police more than in other areas. This legislation affirms local control, and in so doing affirms federal caselaw, and Ohio Constitutional law in regards to home rule.

Thank you for your consideration, Representative Howse and I welcome any questions on this bill.