

44th House District

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State Representative Joshua E. Williams
Ohio House of Representatives

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice-Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 26, the Protecting Ohio Communities Act. I would also like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Fischer, for his work on this legislation.

At the beginning of President Trump's first term in office in 2017, he signed a series of executive orders aimed at the most pressing issues facing our country, with immigration chief amongst them. In recognition of a need for serious action on immigration, President Trump signed Executive Order 13767 and 13768, which ordered the construction of a border wall and the defunding of sanctuary cities, respectively.

In 2021, the Biden-Harris administration reversed President Trump's executive orders. Just three years later in January 2024, the population of illegal immigrants in the country had doubled from 10 million to 20 million¹. Mass illegal migration has resulted in chaos throughout the nation, increasing crime in many areas, increasing the cost of housing and has cost taxpayers a whopping \$150.7 billion².

Yet, there are several counties and cities in Ohio that refuse to cooperate with federal law enforcement and have been dubbed "Sanctuary Cities" and "Welcoming Cities". It is imperative for state government to crack down on illegal immigration and protect working-class Americans from the harmful effects of illegal immigration. To fight illegal immigration, our state must show a unified front. No cities, counties or municipalities should subvert federal immigration laws and incentivize increased illegal migration to our state.

That's why Representative Fischer and I are re-introducing the Protecting Ohio Communities Act, which will defund political subdivisions who refuse to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. The bill requires all political subdivisions comply with the following, subject to a 10% reduction of Local Government Funds (LGF) if they are found to be in obstruction of federal immigration law.

1. **Requires political subdivisions comply with the following:**

¹ <https://thehill.com/opinion/4423296-matthews-illegal-immigrants-double-under-biden-and-thats-just-the-start/>

² <https://www.fairus.org/issue/publications-resources/fiscal-burden-illegal-immigration-united-states-taxpayers-2023>

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- i. Requires every law enforcement agency in Ohio to take certain actions to cooperate with federal officials in the enforcement of federal immigration law.
 - ii. Requires a law enforcement agency to participate in federal programs to share information about arrestees with federal immigration authorities.
 - iii. Requires a law enforcement agency to honor federal detainer requests regarding persons who are unlawfully present in the U.S. and otherwise to cooperate and comply with federal officials in the enforcement of federal immigration law.
 - iv. Adds a provision to Ohio law that mirrors a provision of federal law that makes certain aliens ineligible for state or local public benefits.
 - v. Requires a state or local governmental entity that administers a state or local public benefit to use the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements Program (SAVE) to verify aliens' eligibility for those benefits.
 - vi. Prohibits any state or local governmental agency or political subdivision from adopting an ordinance, policy, directive, rule, or resolution that prohibits or restricts a public official or employee from taking certain actions with respect to immigration enforcement.
 - vii. Declares an emergency.
2. Each municipality and county must report annually to the Ohio Attorney General's office that they are in compliance with this law and that they are complying with any request by federal agencies to assist in the detention of, capture of, or processing of individuals when that underlying issue is based in federal immigration enforcement.
 3. Upon request by any elected official serving in the Ohio legislature, the Ohio Attorney General's office shall open an investigation into any city or county that is the subject of said request in an effort to confirm or dispel their alleged obstruction to the enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws.

With this legislation, we will remove the barriers for federal immigration enforcement in our state, thereby protecting the citizens and workers of Ohio from those who are here illegally and seek to take advantage of our great state. Chairwoman Abrams, Vice-Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on HB 26 today. I welcome any questions you may have.