



TESTIMONY

ENACT THE AMERICA FIRST ACT

House Bill 200

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TESTIMONY BEFORE

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Public Safety

TESTIMONY BY

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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and Honorable Members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 200, the America First Act.

As the Director of Homeland Security and Immigration at the America First Policy Institute (AFPI), I strongly urge you to support this important legislation. House Bill 200 is a vital step forward in ensuring the safety and security of our communities by fostering essential cooperation between Ohio law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. This policy is directly aligned with AFPI's [Removal Roadmap](#) research on how states can lead in immigration enforcement efforts.

While Americans traditionally think of border states as the epicenter for the flood of illegal migration under President Biden, the truth is that every state in our union has felt the negative effects of illegal migration. During the Biden administration, an estimated [11 million illegal aliens](#) – including 2 million “known gotaways” – entered our country. To put that in perspective, that is nearly the population of Ohio.

During the Biden administration, America effectively added a 51st state to the union comprised of illegal border crossers. This “51st state” includes cartel members, Chinese Communist Party members, Iranian regime-backed terrorists, and other criminal illegal aliens. According to recent Pew Research [data](#), many non-border states have sizable illegal alien populations, totaling over an estimated three million. Additionally, an [estimated](#) eight million illegal aliens live in sanctuary jurisdictions. Over a year into the Trump Administration, estimated illegal alien populations are [likely lower](#) due to increased enforcement measures – with over 600,000 deportations in the first year alone.

But the federal government cannot achieve genuine mass deportation on their own. Just like with other federal agencies, state and local cooperation is a required step for an effective immigration law enforcement operation. States must step up their efforts to target, detain, and remove illegal aliens from our communities in partnership with the federal government. Some states, such as Texas, Tennessee, Florida, and Indiana have [lead the way](#) with meaningful policies that strengthen cooperation with federal authorities, crackdown on illegal alien labor, and protect Americans. With the passage of House Bill 200, Ohio will stand with other states in providing the necessary tools to local law enforcement agencies to keep Ohio and the homeland safe and secure. Provisions of the bill include:

1. **Prohibiting any person who is unlawfully present in the U.S. from knowingly entering, attempting to enter, or being present in Ohio.** It is a violation of federal law to enter or re-enter the United States illegally, and [it should be a crime in states as well](#). [AFPI's Removal Roadmap](#), details a plan that begins with classifying this as a state crime, thereby giving state and local officials greater authority to act against such criminals. In addition, it enhances deterrents for illegal aliens entering the country illegally and remaining in states that have this in statute.



2. **Requiring Ohio law enforcement agencies and detention facilities to take certain actions to cooperate with federal officials in enforcing federal immigration law, including participating in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s Criminal Alien Program, honoring ICE detainer requests, and allowing its officers to participate in ICE's 287(g) Program.** The [287\(g\) program](#) empowers state and local law enforcement to perform federal immigration enforcement duties, dramatically force multiplying ICE's reach and improving public safety. Under President Trump, the program has seen rapid and historic growth with over [1,500 agreements](#) now active across 39 states and multiple operational models tailored to local needs. Now, due to the Working Families and Tax Cut Act funding, ICE is able to [reimburse local governments](#) for salaries, benefits, and other costs to incentivize participation. State and local jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) should prioritize public safety and force multiply the federal government's efforts by joining the 287(g) program, bolstered by Working Families and Tax Cut Act funding to cover reimbursement costs.
3. **Requiring all state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce the bill's provisions and impose a penalty if they fail to do so.** Enforcing cooperation between state, local, and federal immigration officers will ensure the continuation of collaboration for years to come. Cooperation, including information sharing, compliance with detainers, 287(g) agreements, and funding programs for enhancement, will play a key role in keeping both states and the nation safe.

The America First Act, will provide critical tools to state and local law enforcers to rid our streets of criminal aliens for good. House Bill 200 is aligned with America First's mission of putting Ohioans, and Americans, first and we look applaud the sponsors for leading this charge.

