

RESOLUTION 22

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT: BUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST

Immigrants and refugees have always played a vital role in building our country and our labor movement, and today is no different. However, politicians attempting to distract from the real issues facing our nation have elevated efforts to criminalize and target immigrants to a level that puts our core democratic values and institutions at risk.

Cities and states around the country are taking steps to establish clear limits on immigration enforcement because they refuse to undermine other essential functions of government. The role of our public schools is to educate our population. The role of our courts is to resolve disputes and interpret the laws. The role of our labor agencies is to enforce minimum workplace standards. The role of our hospitals is to heal the sick. The role of local police is to ensure community safety. These public institutions should never be forced to compromise their vital purposes by becoming an arm of the ever-expanding deportation machinery.

Forcing immigration enforcement presence into all aspects of public life will make our country less safe and less just. It also will lead us to see more illness and more exploitation in our communities. Evidence of this is everywhere. School attendance is down. Workers are running away from labor inspectors at job sites. Women are not reporting domestic violence incidents. People are refusing to seek needed medical care. Hurricane evacuees are even afraid to enter shelters.

The heightened fear in our workplaces and communities directly undermines the common good and erodes our freedom to join together and fight to lift working and living standards for all. Working people understand this, which is why we have been at the forefront of efforts to ensure sensible legal protections in communities across the country.

Community trust policies increase well-being and safety by strengthening the trust between immigrant community members and local government, particularly law enforcement. Strong policies prevent racial profiling and questioning people about their immigration status; stop detention without a warrant; create clear boundaries for immigration enforcement in public spaces; and otherwise limit local government cooperation and information sharing with federal immigration agencies. Importantly, these reforms make it harder for unscrupulous employers to retaliate against worker organizing and use the threat of deportation as a weapon to keep workers from exercising their rights or enforcing standards on the job.

As federal and state agencies threaten to punish and withhold funds from jurisdictions that commit to serve and protect all members of the community, working people are the ones who will suffer. These threats put jobs and vital community programs at risk, and continue to divert attention and resources from the real efforts we need to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure and get people back to work.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO shall continue to demand clear separation of immigration enforcement from local law enforcement and other functions of government because we want safe workplaces, campuses and communities. We call on our elected officials at all levels of government to reject the criminalization of immigrants and engage in policies that protect privacy and due process, and restore trust in our vital public institutions.