

# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



March 13, 2017

The Honorable Larry Metz  
Room 402, House Office Building  
402 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

## ***RE: HB 697: Unnecessary Expansion of Federal Program within State and Local Borders***

Dear Chairman Metz:

We are concerned that HB 697, perhaps inadvertently, adds economic burdens, decreases safety, harms family stability and expands a federal program in local and state jurisdictions without sufficient purpose.

### ***Federal immigration reform should obviate any need for this bill***

Many agree that the current immigration system is flawed. The bishops of the United States have long advocated for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Federal reform should obviate the need for this bill. Notwithstanding the preference for such reform, consider the following concerns:

### ***Economic impact: decreasing revenues and increasing costs***

Studies have demonstrated that humane and comprehensive immigration reform benefits the American economy. The Institute on Tax and Economic Policy estimates that undocumented immigrants in Florida contribute \$598,677,875 annually in state and local taxes.\* These fund programs such as food and housing, to which undocumented immigrants do not have access.

State and local law enforcement are not reimbursed by the federal government for the full cost of tracking and responding to detainees. Holding immigrants at the federal government's request diverts scarce law enforcement personnel and resources from preventing crime and protecting the public.

Despite provisions of the bill requiring detainees to pay costs, the costs will more likely be borne by taxpayers. As noted in the staff analysis, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners estimated compliance with immigration detainers cost the county \$1,002,700 (2011) and \$667,076 (2012).

### ***Public safety: criminals pursued already; changing roles harms local relationships***

It must be noted that nothing in current law prevents any individual, regardless of immigration status, from being prosecuted and convicted for crimes.

Local law enforcement of federal immigration laws does not prevent crime but undermines public safety efforts by eroding community trust in local law enforcement. It has led to lower crime reporting by immigrants and less information sharing between immigrant communities and local police\*\*. To maintain stronger families and communities, local law enforcement should remain distinct from United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

***Concerns for non-violent offenders and family stability***

Additionally, detainers are often issued for individuals with minor or no criminal convictions. As a result, hardworking members of our community are deported and children (including citizen children) are separated from their parents and siblings. When families are torn apart, communities are also harmed.

***HB 697 circumvents local subsidiarity***

This bill circumvents the subsidiarity of state and local leaders who are closest to and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community. It expands a federal program in state and local jurisdictions without sufficient consideration of costs and social impacts.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Sheedy

cc: The Honorable Heather Fitzenhagen, Chair, and Members of Civil Justice and Claims Subcommittee  
Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami and FCCB President  
Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane, Bishop of Venice & FCCB Justice & Peace Moderator  
Ingrid M. Delgado, Associate for Social Concerns/Respect Life

\* Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, <http://www.itep.org/immigration/>, accessed March 13, 2017.

\*\* "Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement," Nik Theodore, May 2013 available at:  
[https://greatcities.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Insecure\\_Communities\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://greatcities.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Insecure_Communities_Report_FINAL.pdf).