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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3808

August 9, 2016

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 2030

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

Last month, the Justice Department announced that it would withhold certain federal funds for law enforcement from sanctuary cities—jurisdictions that forbid their local law enforcement officers from cooperating with federal immigration officials, even when they wish to do so. Specifically, on July 7, 2016, your Justice Department announced it would deny federal funds under the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program and State Criminal Alien Assistance Program to states and localities that “in any way restrict” their officials from sharing information with federal immigration officials.

We applaud efforts to end sanctuary city policies. America has too often seen the dangers that sanctuary cities impose.

Just one year ago, Kate Steinle was walking with her father on a San Francisco pier when a gunman opened fire, hitting Kate. She fell into her father’s arms, pleading, “Help me, Dad,” as she bled to death. That gunman should never have been on the pier that day. He was in the U.S. illegally and had been convicted of seven felonies and deported five times before. A few months earlier, federal agents had asked San Francisco police to keep the man in custody—or at least notify them before releasing the man—so they could come pick him up. San Francisco refused to cooperate, and instead released the man who would go on to kill Kate Steinle.

Sadly, Kate Steinle is not alone. An internal Department of Homeland Security memo revealed that during an eight-month period in 2014, sanctuary jurisdictions released 8,000 individuals. 1,800 were later arrested for criminal acts. This includes two jurisdictions that released individuals arrested for child sexual abuse. In both cases, the individuals were later re-arrested for child sexual assault.

There is no wonder why leaders from across the political spectrum have criticized sanctuary cities. This includes President Obama’s Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson and law enforcement officials across Pennsylvania.

We believe that the City of Philadelphia qualifies as a sanctuary city and, under the Justice Department's new policy, will be ineligible for federal law enforcement funds totaling about \$1.75 million a year. On January 4, 2016, Philadelphia Mayor Kenney issued an executive order forbidding local officials from sharing information about, or complying with detainer requests to hold, an illegal immigrant, unless the person had been convicted of "a first or second degree felony involving violence and the detainer is supported by a judicial warrant." Mayor Kenney's executive order seems directly contrary to the Justice Department's instruction that, in order to remain eligible for federal law enforcement grants, jurisdictions must not "in any way restrict" their officials from sharing information with federal immigration officials.

Our constituents deserve to know whether Mayor Kenney's sanctuary city policy will deprive Philadelphia of much-needed funding for law enforcement, so they can take action. Our law enforcement officers deserve the funds they need to protect our citizens from crime and terrorism.

Accordingly, we respectfully request you respond, within 5 business days, and inform us whether Mayor Kenney's Executive Order of January 4, 2016 is contrary to the policy your Justice Department recently announced, if maintained, will result in Philadelphia losing federal funds under the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program and State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.

Thank you for your time and prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mike Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Ryan Costello
Member of Congress



Patrick Meehan
Member of Congress



Tom Marino
Member of Congress