



City of Seattle

Mike McGinn
Mayor

Pete Holmes
City Attorney

Sally J. Clark
Council President

July 22, 2013

Honorable Councilmember Kathy Lambert
Council District 3
516 Third Avenue, 12th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Honorable County Councilmember Kathy Lambert:

We are writing to express our strong support for proposed County ordinance 2013-0285, which would establish clear standards for honoring immigration detainer requests in County facilities. The passage of this ordinance will be an important step in enhancing the safety of residents of Seattle and King County and we urge your support.

For more than 10 years the City of Seattle has recognized the importance of maintaining a clear separation between the functions of immigration enforcement, which are the purview of the federal government, and the many functions of local government, including local law enforcement. In 2003, the Seattle City Council unanimously adopted ordinance number 121063, which prohibits city officials from conducting inquiries into immigration status in most circumstances. We applaud the County Council for adopting a similar provision in 2009.

The rationale behind the measures adopted by both the City and the County was recognition that, in a region as diverse as ours, even the perception that local governments are cooperating with federal immigration enforcement efforts could significantly undermine the operations of local government. And, in particular, this perception can have a substantial damaging effect on the relationships between local law enforcement agencies and immigrant and refugee communities.

The proposed ordinance will enhance the safety of everyone in Seattle and King County. When community members fail to report information to law enforcement because of fear of immigration enforcement on themselves or their family members, we lose our best tool to hold accountable those engaging in criminal activity. The proposed ordinance will not alter the existing protections within the criminal justice system to address individuals who pose a risk to the community. Those decisions should be made within the criminal justice system, not through immigration enforcement actions.

The current practice of acceding to all of Immigration and Custom Enforcement's (ICE) requests regardless of whether the person has been charged with any serious criminal offense is causing significant damage to the relationship between local law enforcement agencies—including the Seattle Police Department—and many members of our community. The proposed ordinance limiting the honoring of ICE requests to circumstances where individuals have been convicted of more serious

Seattle City Hall, 7th Floor
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

Tel (206) 684-4000
Fax (206) 684-5360
www.seattle.gov

offenses is a much improved approach. In addition, the provision prohibiting honored detainers for persons under the age of 18 is critically important because, unlike in the criminal justice system, children do not enjoy the right to appointed counsel in immigration proceedings.

The City of Seattle, like King County, values its growing diverse communities. The proposed ordinance is a step in the right direction in enhancing the safety of all of our residents and in ensuring that our practices are consistent with our values.

Sincerely,



Mike McGinn
Mayor of Seattle



Pete Holmes
City Attorney



Sally J. Clark, President
Seattle City Council



Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Councilmember



Tim Burgess
Seattle City Councilmember



Richard Conlin
Seattle City Councilmember



Jean Godden
Seattle City Councilmember



Bruce Harrell
Seattle City Councilmember



Nick Licata
Seattle City Councilmember



Mike O'Brien
Seattle City Councilmember



Tom Rasmussen
Seattle City Councilmember

cc: County Executive Dow Constantine
County Council President Larry Gossett
County Councilmember Rod Dembowski
County Councilmember Joe McDermott
Deputy County Executive Fred Jarrett