

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/how-federal-covid-19-relief-funding-can-support-immigrant-communities>**

## Policy Issue Resources

### Publication

Federal COVID-19 relief funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), intended for COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts as well as recovery and stability for communities particularly those disproportionately affected by the pandemic can be used to counter the harms endured by immigrant communities and to promote health and safety. One key way to do this is to invest in immigrant legal services, including deportation defense programs.

Vera has researched and advocated for deportation defense programs through its SAFE Initiative, which furthers the movement for universal representation. ARP funding can be leveraged to create and expand such programs because they can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by securing the release of people from detention, disrupt the pipeline between the criminal legal and immigration systems and reduce racial and economic disparities, and keep families and communities together.

Deportation defense programs are integral to countering the interconnected harms of COVID-19, criminalization, and systemic racism on immigrant communities. ARP funding provides a distinct and appropriate route to invest in these programs, which mitigate the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on immigrant communities and promote their health and safety.

ICE detention facilities are a vector of COVID-19, and release from detention is nearly impossible without representation. Deportation defense programs ensure legal advocacy for the health, safety, and freedom of people in detention.

Deportation defense programs help communities recover, stabilize, and grow by keeping families, workplaces, and communities together and stable.

Five jurisdictions Pittsburgh, PA; Washington, DC; North Miami, FL; Long Beach, CA; and Los Angeles County have already leveraged ARP funds to support deportation defense.

SPECIAL REPORT (SINGLE)

PUBLICATION

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