

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/how-the-american-rescue-plan-can-support-immigrant-communities>

## Policy Issue Resources

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The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act provides state and local governments with a once-in-a-lifetime pathway not only toward recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to create stronger, healthier communities in its wake. The ARP allocated [\\$350 billion](#) in flexible funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to address the harms of COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury [encourages](#) governments to spend ARP dollars to aid recovery, stability, and assistance to households, businesses, and organizations disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This includes immigrant communities.

One way these funds can help ensure safety and health for immigrant communities during the pandemic? By funding immigrant legal services, including deportation defense programs. Investing in deportation defense ensures [advocacy for the health and safety](#) of people facing deportation and detention and for communities cumulatively harmed by COVID-19, criminalization, and systemic racism.

Jurisdictions can use ARP funds to create or expand public investment in immigrant justice and legal defense programs for people facing deportation, like the ones in Veras [SAFE Initiative](#), in order to foster COVID-19 prevention and mitigation, economic recovery, and direct investment in communities. For more details on how communities are already doing this and why, see [How Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding Can Support Immigrant Communities](#).

State and local governments are working with their immigrant communities to assess priorities and plan how they'll use federal funds. A number of cities have already committed to using ARP funds to expand existing deportation defense programs or to start new ones.

The table below highlights how localities are using ARP funds to invest in deportation defense. To compile this list, Vera searched for examples of city- or county-based ARP fund spending plans or fiscal year 2022 budgets to identify existing budgetary commitments toward immigrant legal services and deportation defense. Not all cities and counties have made these fiscal decisions or shared them online. In addition, this list does not include the many jurisdictions that as part of the [movement for universal representation](#) have expanded their programs or started new ones this year using state and local sources of funding.

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 ...

### Years 1-3 of the SAFE Initiative

In 2017, the Vera Institute of Justice launched the Safety and Fairness for Everyone Network known as the SAFE Initiative or SAFE to counter the fundamental and urgent injustices facing immigrants caught up in the nation's immigration enforcement system. With roots in Vera's work for the past 15 years building the government-funded removal de ...

A laundry list of minor traffic violations can lead to tickets and even jail time. In the worst cases, police stops for trivial infractions turn deadly. But stops for those offenses tinted windows, a missing inspection sticker, an air freshener dangling from the rearview mirror don't make us safer. They do, however, drive racial disparities: study ...

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