

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

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The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio expressed disappointment yesterday, after members of the Ohio General Assembly announced a new initiative that duplicates various federal immigration laws and opens the door for massive racial and ethnic profiling throughout the state.

The Act, titled the Illegal Alien Enforcement Act, seeks to charge local law enforcement with imposing federal laws, restricting assistance programs from helping needy Ohioans and requiring businesses to affirm they do not employ undocumented workers. In Thursday's announcement, the Act was touted as beneficial to legal immigrants in Ohio.

Despite the claims of its advocates, none of their proposals offer real protections or services to legal immigrants, said ACLU of Ohio Legal Director Jeffrey Gamso. Legislators are simply cloaking a fundamentally harmful bill with false claims of assistance to some of those it will hurt.

Gamso continued, Unfortunately, this Act will do much more to harm the lives of immigrants and people of color in Ohio. The bill is a green light for state and local officials to target and discriminate against tens of thousands of Ohioans under the guise of enforcing immigration laws.

Inevitably, such initiatives will prove counterproductive to providing security and fighting crime in communities around Ohio. Under the Act, vital resources and funding to enforce local criminal laws will be diverted to investigating immigration violations. As the specter of state and local law enforcement imposing immigration laws looms over minority communities in Ohio, fewer victims and witnesses to crime will come forward and cooperate with police. The result is a community afraid of police officers and law enforcement crippled and unable to investigate and prevent crime in communities.

Several provisions of the Act duplicate and may conflict with federal laws already in place, creating more bureaucracy and making it more difficult to enforce immigration laws. Various sections of the bill calling for new offices, positions within state government and increased resources towards enforcing federal laws are poised to drain taxpayer resources and cost the state millions of dollars.

Ohio has real problems that must be addressed, yet the Ohio General Assembly is spending time debating a federal problem that will only detract from critical discussions on education and the economy that will greatly impact future generations of Ohioans, concluded Gamso.

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