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Utah House of Representatives
Utah State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

RE: HB 237 - Illegal Immigration Enforcement Act

Dear Representative:

Last week the House Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committee approved HB 237 “Illegal Immigration Enforcement Act,” which would grant state and local law enforcement officers the power to enforce federal immigration laws. The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah opposes this bill, and we urge you to vote against it when it comes before you for your consideration.

By allowing for the integration of law enforcement and immigration duties, HB 237 would have a chilling effect on community policing efforts in immigrant communities. Effective law enforcement depends upon the trust and cooperation of community residents, as well as victims of and witnesses to crimes. They would be less likely to go to the police if they believe that their or their families’ immigration status will be investigated. HB 237 would weaken the important community partnerships that state and local law enforcement have worked so hard to establish, and criminal activity would go unreported and unpunished.

The enforcement of federal immigration laws will divert scarce resources away from the work of preventing and investigating real crimes taking place in our communities, and public safety will inevitably be compromised. Additionally, turning law enforcement officers into federal immigration agents increases the danger of illegal racial and ethnic profiling, as some officers will stop and question people whose only offense is that they look or sound foreign.

It is for the above reasons that police chiefs around the country have spoken out against using local police to enforce federal immigration laws. Salt Lake City Police Chief Chris Burbank did so recently when he testified in the House Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committee. HB 237 is the first step to turning our police officers into immigration agents, and it therefore undermines Utah’s public safety interests.

Please vote against HB 237.

Sincerely yours,

Karen McCreary
Executive Director