

**LETTER** *Published June 30, 2026 · 4 minute read*

# **Cooperation, Resources, and Trust: The Public Safety Stakes Beyond the Sanctuary Debate**

**Sarah Pierce**

*Testimony provided by Sarah Pierce to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement on June 30, 2026.*

Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Jayapal and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. Ms. Gormon and Mr. Abraham, no one should suffer what you have suffered. I am deeply sorry for your losses, and I respect and honor your courage in being here today.

My name is Sarah Pierce, and I am the Director of Social Policy at Third Way, where I lead our work on crime and immigration.

Third Way has a long history of saying things that make both Democrats and Republicans unhappy, so let me start there: The Biden Administration's border policies were inexcusable. The Trump Administration's interior enforcement policies are inexcusable.

My testimony focuses on why: this Administration is demanding more from local police while making their jobs harder.

I have three points.

**First, sanctuary policies do not prevent ICE from enforcing federal law.**

Every jurisdiction, including self-proclaimed sanctuaries, participates in immigration enforcement. When someone is booked, fingerprints are checked against federal databases and flagged for ICE. ICE has federal authority, agents, databases, and now extraordinary funding: \$113.5 billion in supplemental funding through 2029—more than the combined annual operating budgets of every local police department in America.

Meanwhile, state and local law enforcement are starved for resources. Three-quarters of local police departments have fewer than 25 officers. They handle crime, overdoses, and sensitive community calls. Asking them to absorb federal duties pulls officers away from local obligations.

The focus should be how cooperation can advance public safety and support local policing.

**Second: this Administration is making local cooperation harder, not easier.**

Local jurisdictions need to trust federal partners before lending local resources. Yet this Administration has treated skeptical jurisdictions as adversaries to be punished, not partners to be persuaded. It has threatened funding, filed lawsuits, and accused entire jurisdictions of protecting criminals.

ICE's tactics have deepened this trust deficit. The public cannot distinguish police and ICE, especially when ICE agents wear "police" markings. When federal operations are chaotic, abusive, or deadly, local police are left to repair the damage.

**Third, this Administration's own decisions are making Americans vulnerable to crime.**

Federal law enforcement are abandoning serious work in favor of immigration.

In San Francisco, federal drug dealing prosecutions fell by more than half after federal agents were redirected to immigration enforcement.

In Minnesota, Hennepin County's top prosecutor said federal agents began bringing criminal cases to her because they are overwhelmed with immigration work.

In addition, tens of thousands of federal agents with specialized expertise in child exploitation, human trafficking, cyber threats, and transnational criminal networks have been redirected toward immigration. That's especially dangerous for child exploitation cases, which depend on specialized agents and resources. When those agents are reassigned, children wait longer to be found and predators get more time to harm them.

The Department of Justice is also weakening public safety infrastructure by delaying and canceling grants.

Each year DOJ grants billions for police hiring, prosecutors, and victim services. Congress provided more than \$4.5 billion for fiscal year 2025 grants from DOJ's Office of Justice Programs, but just half has gone out the door. Notably for the majority on this Committee, the states you represent are missing \$163 million in Congressionally authorized FY 2025 public safety funding. That money that should have gone out last year has yet to be given to Alabama, Arizona, California, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin.

The Administration has also terminated more than \$820 million in public safety grants.

Cutting initiatives on rural crime, officer safety and wellness, anti-terrorism training, and more than half of federal gun violence prevention funding.

For grants that are going out, new ideological conditions related to political priorities like vaccines, gender, and protection of public monuments are discouraging applicants from even applying.

I urge this Subcommittee to broaden its oversight and stop treating sanctuary fights as a substitute for public safety oversight. Demand a course correction: restore these grants to

your own states, stop diverting specialized agents from serious crime, and rebuild the trust local law enforcement needs.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

**[Read the full testimony here.](#)**

---