July 22, 2015

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to H.R. 3009, Enforce the Law for Sanctuary Cities Act

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 39 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to strongly urge you to vote against H.R. 3009.

H.R. 3009 would withhold federal law enforcement funding for states and local jurisdictions, characterized as “sanctuary cities,” that limit interaction between federal immigration agencies and local law enforcement agencies in order to build trust in the community and promote local public safety goals. NHLA recommends a “no” vote on H.R. 3009, the Enforce the Law for Sanctuary Cities Act and any similar legislation. NHLA will closely monitor any votes on them for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community.

Such legislation, a misguided response to the tragic murder of an innocent woman in San Francisco, is based on sweeping generalizations about all immigrants based on the actions of one individual, thus scapegoating immigrants, and in particular Latino immigrants. It is unacceptable when a presidential contender such as Donald Trump makes such generalizations in campaigning and equally unacceptable when Members of Congress do so in legislating. No responsible public official should use this tragedy as a pretext for harsh and unproductive policies that only serve to satisfy the anti-immigrant impulses of certain politicians while doing nothing to improve public safety. The facts speak for themselves: numerous studies have shown that immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans, less likely to commit crimes, and less likely to be repeat offenders.

Though the case in San Francisco is tragic, no single occurrence should warrant such a wholesale change in policy, particularly with insufficient time to obtain all the facts and relevant policy considerations in relation to the case. Legislating based on scoring political points and ignoring the underlying problems of our immigration and criminal justice systems is not the solution. The federal government has implemented harsh immigration removal policies in the recent past, including unconstitutional detainer requests, that failed to promote public safety, instead tearing families apart by deporting individuals for minor nonviolent offenses and creating fear of authorities that undermined the cooperation that local law enforcement needs in order to protect the public.
In order to effectively address problems with our broken immigration system, Congress should resume the effort started in the 113th Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns. Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno, of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org or 202-572-0467 with any questions regarding this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair

Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair