LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
4TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS
2266 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-8203
(202) 225-7810 Fax

DISTRICT OFFICE:
2201 WEST NORTH AVENUE
CHICAGO, IL 60647
(773) 342-0774
(773) 342-0776 Fax

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

COMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND CONSUMER CREDIT
CHAIRMAN
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY POLICY AND TRADE
JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE:
IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, REFUGEES, BORDER SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

May 5, 2011

The Honorable Pat Quinn
Governor
State of Illinois

Mr. Hiram Grau
Director
Illinois State Police

Dear Governor Quinn and Director Grau:

I write to thank you for your leadership and for the prudent and timely decision to terminate your Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the State of Illinois and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on the so-called Secure Communities program. Earlier today in a meeting of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), I and other members discussed your action in the context of our own serious objections to the program. Rep. Albio Sires of New Jersey made a motion, that was seconded by others, directing me to express our strong support of the vital step you took to protect our communities from this flawed program.

Congressional Hispanic Caucus members represent constituents from coast to coast across the United States who have repeatedly raised their concerns that the stated purpose and goals of the Secure Communities program were not being met, with serious consequences for public safety. Like you and your dedicated law enforcement officers in Illinois, I and the CHC members strongly support the purported goals of the program, that is, to deport dangerous criminals who threaten our communities. Given the degree that Latinos and immigrants throughout the U.S. are targeted and become victims of crime, you will find no greater support for the deportation of violent individuals than in the neighborhoods we represent.

However, as you clearly stated in your letter terminating the MOA, statistics on the program reveal that the implementation in Illinois--and other jurisdictions around the country--is contrary to the stated purposes of the MOAs. Before the Congressional district work period in April, the CHC discussed and approved the official position of the Caucus on Secure Communities: to halt the aggressive expansion of the program to allow for a robust review and evaluation of Secure Communities. Today, the Hispanic Caucus sent a letter to President Obama asking for the same:

> On behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we write to request that you freeze the Secure Communities Program ("S-Comm"), effective immediately. We appreciate and steadfastly support your efforts to reform broken immigration laws and to strengthen national security and public safety. Unfortunately, neither of these goals are served or advanced by the S-Comm policy in its current form.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

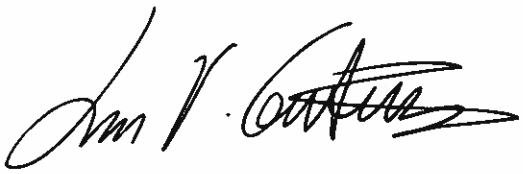
> To the contrary, evidence reveals not only a striking dissonance between the program's stated purpose of removing dangerous criminals and its actual effect; it also suggests that S-Comm may endanger the public, particularly among communities of color. [...]
>
> We have said emphatically that we support initiatives that prioritize and effectuate the removal of dangerous criminal aliens. However, the astonishing rate of non-criminal deportations caused by this program suggests S-Comm is not living up to its name. We are not convinced the program is achieving its stated goals, and we see nothing in the management and oversight of S-Comm that convinces us that these risks have been adequately addressed in this latest incarnation of local police immigration enforcement, the scope of which is vastly broader than any other similar program to date. For these reasons, we request an immediate freeze of S-Comm pending a thorough review.

The use of programs and enforcement resources to detain and remove immigrants who pose no threat and have no criminal convictions undermines public safety by making local police a source of fear to law-abiding immigrants and their families rather than partners, protectors and allies. Programs like Secure Communities result in pretextual stops and arrests based on racial profiling, result in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of non-criminal individuals (who are often the parents and/or spouses of U.S. citizens and legal residents), and are often in conflict with the purported goals and priorities of ICE enforcement efforts.

Leadership on issues such as these is made all the more difficult because of the vitriolic and political nature of the ongoing debate on immigration. You, however, recognize that it is not in Illinois best interest to play politics with public safety. For this, I extend the appreciation expressed in our CHC meeting to you for leaning into this important issue and setting a sound and sensible example for other jurisdictions and states around our country.

I congratulate you, Governor Quinn, on your choice of Director of State Police and I thank you for your bold response to the needs of our community and all Americans concerned with civil rights and public safety. It is important that you know that I and my concerned colleagues in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus of the U.S. Congress proudly stand with you on your decision. Please let us know how we can be of further assistance on this issue or other issues of concern.

Sincerely,



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress
CHC Immigration Task Force Chair