

An Open Letter to Multnomah County Elected Officials Regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agents Housed in the Multnomah County Jail Facilities

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office authorizes Immigrations and Customs Enforcement to maintain a direct presence in the Multnomah County jails. This agreement is meant to facilitate cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement. However, the enactment of this policy means that non-citizen residents of Multnomah County who are arrested for relatively minor offenses are often deported, regardless of the seriousness of the offense or their culpability. This relationship impedes community policing goals, damages relations with Multnomah County's immigrant communities, and may be in violation of state law.

We, the undersigned urge Multnomah County elected officials to end the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents at Central Booking in the Multnomah County Detention Center for the following reasons:

Fiscal Responsibility: Public records fail to indicate where the federal government reimburses Multnomah County for the cost of detaining individuals who have been placed on ICE hold and who have not yet been convicted of a crime. This means that the cost of housing individuals held on ICE detainers is borne entirely by Multnomah County. *It is our opinion that detaining and deporting individuals from our communities should not be a priority for Multnomah County.*

Community Safety: Portland and Multnomah County set out in 1989 to create a community policing program, with the goal of creating safer communities through better relations between police and local community members. *ICE presence in our local county jail, and the belief by the Multnomah County's immigrant and refugee population that interaction with police and sheriff's officers may lead to deportation weakens the relationship between local law enforcement and the community and undermines the principles of community policing.*

Civil Rights and Access to Due Process: The cooperation between the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and ICE raises significant questions of legality and liability. Problems arise when US citizens and others who are in legal immigration status are mistakenly flagged by ICE, when ICE places a hold on an individual who has been convicted of no crime and who was not involved in drug-related offenses, and when individuals are detained under an ICE hold for longer than the 48 hour time period permitted by federal law. Individuals are routinely denied the opportunity to be released on bond based on real or perceived irregularities in their immigration status. *There is concern that Multnomah County may be incurring liability for unlawful detentions in these situations.*

Family Unity: All deportations have a significant impact on families. Mothers and fathers are abruptly torn away from their children, single parents are forced to leave their children with a caregiver or bring them to a country that is completely foreign to them. As the discussion about immigration reform continues to develop, parties on all sides agree that the system is broken, and that it will take broad-based change on a national level to reach a fair solution. *During this period of discussion, we believe that Multnomah County should not assist with enforcement-only policies on a local level that only serve to tear apart families and communities.*

