

ACLU Wisconsin: Releases report on immigration enforcement in Wisconsin, exposing the jail-to-deportation pipeline

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MILWAUKEE – The ACLU of Wisconsin today released a report investigating the nature of immigration enforcement in Wisconsin, detailing how close collaboration between local law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is creating a jail-to-deportation pipeline in Wisconsin.

The report exposes how formal and informal agreements between local sheriffs and ICE, the illegal detention of immigrants on ICE detainers, data sharing, and strong financial incentives have created this pipeline, which is partly fueled by millions of dollars in federal grant funding for incarcerating immigrants who are identified as or suspected to be undocumented.

The Jail-to-Deportation Pipeline in Wisconsin builds on findings gleaned from the ACLU's 2018 report on the subject, using data derived from responses to open records requests the organization filed with every county sheriff's department in Wisconsin.

The report exposed that the worst offender was the Walworth County Sheriff, which sent reports to ICE on every foreign born person who enters the jail, regardless of their immigration status, and detained the highest percentage of its immigrant community on ICE holds.

In dozens of emails obtained by the ACLU, most with the subject line "foreign born," Walworth County Jail these employees notified a deportation officer when an

immigrant came into contact with the criminal justice system. In numerous cases, naturalized citizens, DACA recipients and other documented people in Walworth were reported to ICE. Email records also showed that a deportation officer was sent daily rosters of every person held in the jails in Clark and Walworth Counties.

The report also highlighted that 30 Wisconsin counties and the DOC received over \$2 million combined in federal funding through the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). Overseen by the Department the Office of Justice Programs, SCAAP partially reimburses state and municipal governments for the costs of incarcerating certain undocumented people who have committed crimes. To obtain that money, departments disclose to ICE information about people who were incarcerated for at least four consecutive days and were either identified or suspected of being undocumented.

Between 2016 and 2020, Wisconsin's biggest local sheriff beneficiary of SCAAP funding was Dane County, which collected more than \$634,000 for handing information over to ICE. Although Walworth County has a much smaller immigrant population, it received the second highest SCAAP payout.

"ICE is continuing to work to build and strengthen its deportation pipeline despite the change in administration in Washington. It is xenophobic and racist to contact ICE every time a foreign born person enters your jail as some sheriff departments do. And the federal government is continuing to incentivize this kind of behavior by dangling millions in SCAAP funding in front of local sheriffs," said Tim Muth, a staff attorney at the ACLU of Wisconsin. "The local sheriffs who are willing collaborators with ICE are betraying immigrants who live in their counties by inviting the threat of ICE and the prospect of deportation into their lives."

Other key findings and highlights include:

- In 2018, Waukesha was the only Wisconsin county working with ICE under a 287(g) agreement - a program delegating certain immigration enforcement responsibilities to local and state officials. Since then, Sheboygan Fond Du Lac, Brown Lafayette, Manitowoc, Marquette, and Waushara counties have all signed WSO agreements - a newer iteration of the 287(g) program which ICE hopes will induce more sheriffs to "partner" with them in holding immigrants on detainers..

- The majority of Wisconsin county sheriff departments continue to honor ICE detainer requests, even though they do not have legal authority to do so.
- From 2006 to 2020, ICE sought to deport more than 12,000 immigrants living in Wisconsin after picking them up from jails and prisons across the state.

The ACLU urges Wisconsin sheriffs to reject ICE detainer requests, terminate all 287(g) contracts and other formal and informal agreements with ICE, end participation in SCAAP, prohibit automatic reporting of foreign-born individuals to ICE, and enact immigrant-friendly policies that strengthen our communities.

The report is available online: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/publications/report--wisconsins-jail-deportation-pipeline>

This press release is available online: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/-press-releases/aclu-wisconsin-releases-report-immigration-enforcement-wisconsin--exposing-jail>