

Albuquerque City Council Members,

We at the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (NMCSAP) are writing to express opposition to R-24-45. We lead the state's efforts to reduce sexual violence and support survivors through training, technical assistance, data collection, and policy. Through our work, we hear about the obstacles faced by survivors both from themselves and from our many community partners including nurses, advocates, law enforcement, and attorneys. Because of this, we recognize that our work is intertwined with the advancement of immigrant rights and safety and believe that R-24-45 will negatively impact immigrant victims of gender based violence, including sexual violence and human trafficking.

One of the greatest barriers to survivors coming forward is trusting that they will be believed and protected. Trust is essential. Directing the Albuquerque Police Department to enforce federal immigration laws based on charges rather than convictions will further erode trust between them and Black, brown, and immigrant communities. Many immigrants have had negative experiences with police in their home country or in the U.S. This proposal would only deepen that distrust, making it both harder on police to address these serious crimes and for immigrants to feel safe seeking help and participating in the criminal legal process. We know first hand the chilling effect such policy proposals have. For example, after the 2016 election when immigration officials were allowed back into courthouses, a large number of immigrant survivors no longer sought access to court services like orders of protection. This made them and their families more vulnerable and made our communities as a whole less safe.

Any proposal that increases fear about immigration status creates additional barriers to sexual assault and human trafficking survivors seeking support. The individuals who cause harm that this bill aims to target often use immigration status and the threat of deportation to further control and silence their victims. We are deeply concerned that rather than decreasing acts of violence, this will instead further intimidate victims into continued silence and would actually strengthen the tools those who cause harm use to keep their victims quiet.

Additionally, in domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking cases it may be initially unclear to less experienced law enforcement who is a victim. Those who cause harm often know the laws and may manipulate their victims into doing illegal things so that they are not culpable. Currently victims themselves are sometimes arrested or charged before the reality of their situation becomes clear. With this amendment, those victims would now be facing possible life threatening detainment and deportation, completely undermining the amendment's intentions.

We encourage you when considering this and future decisions to look at the Violence Against Women Act and the recent NM Supreme Court decision in *Ramirez v. Marsh* as resources for further understanding the vulnerability and care needed in supporting immigrant survivors of sexual violence.

Just like each one of you, we are deeply committed to building safer communities free of crime and violence. Yet we know that our communities are safer when victims and survivors trust that they can come forward, report, and access resources without fear. Because of this we oppose R-24-45 and urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,
The New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs