

I wear a button on my jacket that says “Immigrants and Refugees Welcome, No Ban No Wall” and as I walk my dog around town, I always get supportive and appreciative comments from passersby. Pacifica is a place that values all members of our community: immigrants or not, undocumented or not.

I am a member of Pacifica Social Justice, and working with two lawyers, we wrote an ordinance declaring Pacifica a “Sanctuary City.” The purpose of the ordinance is to protect the community, including immigrants, and to conserve the city’s limited police resources. Pacifica City Council considers the ordinance on September 11. Please come support a positive decision for our community.

In April, for five Saturdays, Pacifica Social Justice circulated petitions urging city, county, and state officials to support legislation that will prevent deporting or otherwise acting against individuals based on their documentation status. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Our ordinance states: “Immigrants are valuable and essential members of our community who contribute to our vibrant culture and power our economic engine.” It explains that the safety of Pacificans requires a relationship of trust between the police and the immigrant community, and that this relationship is undermined when local law enforcement takes on immigration enforcement roles appropriately left to federal authorities.

From talking to teachers in Pacifica schools, we know that many students are frightened by threats from the federal government. Both Pacifica School District and Jefferson Unified School District have adopted resolutions supporting students and families of any immigration status, and restricting cooperation with immigration and other authorities requesting private information.

We want a Pacifica where children are safe and valued no matter where they come from. We want a Pacifica where all the people who live and work here are judged on their own merits and respected no matter what their documentation status. Many thousands of people living and working in Pacifica are immigrants. Immigrants have always made an important contribution to the economic and social fabric of our community.

If Pacifica City Council adopts the ordinance, it will join many other California cities and counties that have adopted sanctuary ordinances or resolutions in response to the increasing anti-immigrant national rhetoric. The first Bay Area sanctuary city ordinances were passed to protect Central American refugees who were denied asylum during the 1980s. Currently, many Bay Area cities and counties, including San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, San Jose, and Santa Clara County have ordinances that generally limit use of local resources to enforce federal immigration laws.

In June, Menlo Park became the latest city in San Mateo County to adopt “Safe City” and “Noncooperation with Sensitive Information Registry” ordinances. Federal officials must rely on local police to help enforce federal immigration laws, but the law doesn't require local authorities to detain immigrants just because their federal counterparts make a request. In fact, federal courts across the country have found complying with the requests is voluntary.

The president issued an Executive Order to take away federal funding from all jurisdictions that declare themselves sanctuaries. In response, San Francisco, Santa Clara County, and the State of California filed a lawsuit against the government’s right to withhold funds. In April, a federal judge blocked the order, stating that it is unconstitutional, and that only Congress can place

conditions on funding. Many jurisdictions across the country have declared themselves sanctuaries and vowed not to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The State Legislature is currently considering several bills regarding these issues, including SB 54, The California Values Act, which would limit local and state law enforcement agency cooperation with federal immigration agencies; and SB 31, the California Religious Freedom Act, which would prohibit local and state agencies from “providing or disclosing to the federal government personal information regarding a person’s religious beliefs, practices, or affiliation.” It would prohibit state agencies from providing information to such a database.

On September 11, Pacifica City Council will discuss and vote on Pacifica becoming a Sanctuary City. The ordinance has been vetted by the city attorney and will be presented by city staff. Please come support protections for all Pacifica residents, workers, and visitors.

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Pacifica Social Justice