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Operational
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Statement from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Director Sarah R. Saldaña



Yesterday, during my testimony before the House of Representatives' Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I was asked whether it would help if Congress clarified the law to make it clear that it was mandatory that local jurisdictions cooperate with ICE. I want to be sure there is no confusion about my response.

In November 2014, Secretary Johnson directed ICE to end the Secure Communities program, and replace it with the new Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), a transition that is underway now. I fully support this new approach. PEP contemplates a cooperative approach toward public safety, not mandatory federal requirements. The reality is that Secure Communities had become legally and politically controversial, and led to the enactment by numerous jurisdictions of laws, ordinances, directives and policies that limit their cooperation with ICE in our efforts to promote public safety.

The new program, PEP, is a common-sense approach to immigration enforcement and public safety, that closely and clearly reflects DHS' new enforcement priorities, and Secretary Johnson and I have now embarked upon an aggressive plan to engage state, county and local officials to seek their cooperation with PEP. It is critical that PEP be implemented in a way that also supports community policing and sustains the trust of all elements of the community in working with law enforcement. That's why we are also in the process of engaging local communities and stakeholders as well. The overriding objective is public safety, while implementing this new approach in a way that upholds the trusted relationships local law enforcement need to build with and among their communities, and we believe these officials will recognize and concur with our goals. Any effort at federal legislation now to mandate state and local law enforcement's compliance with ICE detainers will, in our view, be a highly counterproductive step and lead to more resistance and less cooperation in our overall efforts to promote public safety.

