

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 30, 2025

The Honorable Freddie O’Connell
Mayor
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County
1 Public Square
Suite 100, Mayor’s Office
Nashville, TN 37201

Dear Mayor O’Connell:

The Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives are conducting oversight of state and local jurisdictions that endanger American communities through efforts aimed at thwarting the work of federal immigration officials. While the state of Tennessee has outlawed sanctuary policies,¹ recent actions from your office threaten to chill immigration enforcement in the City of Nashville and Davidson County.² Accordingly, we write to request information about how your recent actions, including a directive to Nashville and Davidson County employees to disclose their communications with federal immigration officials, affects the robust enforcement of immigration law.

Under the principle that “illegal aliens do not have the right to remain in the U.S. undetected and unapprehended,” Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996.³ This federal law explicitly prohibits any restriction on communication between state or local entities and federal immigration authorities relating to an individual’s immigration status.⁴ A related federal statute prohibits impeding or interfering with the actions of a federal law enforcement official who is “engaged in . . . the performance of official duties.”⁵

Earlier this month, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) partnered with the Tennessee Highway Patrol in an immigration enforcement action that “resulted in the arrest of 196 criminal illegal aliens, some with significant criminal histories and outstanding final orders of removal.”⁶ Instead of supporting those law enforcement efforts to protect Tennessee residents,

¹ Tenn Code Ann. § 7-68-103 (2024).

² Tom Pappert, *Nashville Mayor Signs Executive Order to Create Early Warning System for Immigration Enforcement Operations*, THE TENN. STAR (May 12, 2025), <https://tennesseestar.com/news/nashville-mayor-signs-executive-order-to-create-early-warning-system-for-immigration-enforcement-operations/tpappert/2025/05/12/>.

³ H. Rep. No. 104-469, part 1, at 277 (1996).

⁴ See 8 U.S.C. § 1373(a).

⁵ See 18 U.S.C. § 111(a).

⁶ Press Release, ICE announces results of targeted enforcement operation in Nashville area, U.S. IMMIGR. AND CUSTOMS ENF’T (May 13, 2025), <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-announces-results-targeted-enforcement-operation-nashville-area>.

you condemned ICE's immigration enforcement actions.⁷ You also announced a "partnership" with local activist organizations to create a fund to raise money to "support" aliens, including those "affected by the ICE [enforcement actions]."⁸

We are also concerned about your directive to most Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County employees "who are reasonably likely to engage in" communications with "federal immigration authorities" to report those communications to your office.⁹ Specifically, your amended Executive Order 030 directs employees of any "Metro emergency services department," including the police department, to report communications with federal immigration officials "within one business day."¹⁰ The Executive Order also requires non-law enforcement employees to report to your office if they communicate with federal immigration officials about "modifying a policy or practice of a Metro department or office."¹¹

This Executive Order could have a chilling effect on the ability of local law enforcement to communicate freely and candidly with federal immigration employees. In fact, your chief lawyer recently admitted that it was an "open question" whether an individual could legally "announce in advance that there's an impending enforcement activity."¹² This statement, when viewed in context of your order requiring all Metro law-enforcement officers to report about communications with ICE personnel, raises the prospect that Metro employees may use nonpublic information to warn criminal aliens of planned ICE enforcement operations. In other words, there is the real potential that your Executive Order could have the effect of diminishing ICE enforcement operations.

Your actions could chill the enforcement of federal immigration law and undermine public safety. Accordingly, to assist the Committees with our continued oversight of federal immigration policy and to inform potential legislative reforms, we ask that you provide the following information:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the amendment of Executive Order 030, for the period beginning on May 1, 2025, to the present;

⁷ Cindy Abrams, *Nashville mayor demands names of nearly 200 people detained by ICE*, NPR (May 16, 2025, 4:35 AM), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/16/nx-s1-5399593/nashville-mayor-demands-names-of-nearly-200-people-detained-by-ice>.

⁸ Press Conference by Freddie O'Connell, Mayor, Metro. Gov't of Nashville and Davidson County and Hal Cato, Chief Exec. Officer, Cmty. Found. of Middle Tenn., (May 5, 2025), available at <https://www.wsmv.com/2025/05/05/nashville-mayor-says-state-federal-officials-coordinated-without-us-ice-detainments/>.

⁹ Mayor Freddie O'Connell Executive Order Number 030 (Amended), *Communications Between Federal Immigration Authorities and the Metropolitan Government (Amended)*, available at <https://www.nashville.gov/departments/metro-clerk/legal-resources/executive-orders/mayor-freddie-oconnell/fo030>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Nashville Mayor Roundtable, Statement by Wallace Dietz, Director of Law, Metro. Gov't of Nashville and Davidson County, (May 9, 2025), available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1776571386611981.

2. All documents and communications referring or relating to ICE enforcement actions in the City of Nashville or Davidson County, for the period beginning on May 1, 2025, to the present; and
3. All documents and communications between or among Metro employees and non-Metro employees, including but not limited to non-governmental organizations, referring or relating to the arrest of criminal aliens in the City of Nashville and Davidson County, for the period beginning on May 1, 2025, to the present.

Please provide the information requested as soon as possible but no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 13, 2025.

The Committees are authorized to conduct oversight of federal immigration law pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives.¹³ If you have any questions, please contact Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 225-6906 and Homeland Security Committee staff at (202) 226-8417.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary



Mark E. Green
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Tom McClintock
Chairman
Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity,
Security, and Enforcement



Andy Ogles
Chairman
Congressional Counter-Terrorism Caucus

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

¹³ Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, R. X (2025).

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The Honorable Pramila Jayapal

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement