

## FACT SHEET

# HOW TRUMP'S STATE & LOCAL STRATEGY TARGETS LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

18 FEB 2025

When it comes to the Trump administration's state and local strategy on immigration enforcement, much attention has been given to its attacks on sanctuary jurisdictions on one hand, and its efforts to boost collaboration with willing jurisdictions on the other. Receiving less attention within this strategy is a deliberate effort to weaken and subvert trusted nonprofit organizations—often seen as pillars of the community. This piece examines these attacks on local nonprofit organizations and their broader implications for these trusted local institutions.

## WHO ARE THESE LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND WHY ARE THEY INTEGRAL TO THEIR COMMUNITIES?

These local organizations provide crucially needed services such as legal orientation programs, food and housing assistance, and other resources to underserved communities, including immigrants. They are vital in assisting recently arrived immigrants become more settled and established in their communities and by helping them in becoming self-sufficient. Many of these organizations receive federal funding to provide these services through programs like the [Shelter and Services Program](#), which has provided millions of dollars to local organizations who provide shelter and other services to immigrants recently released from immigrant detention.

## HOW IS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TARGETING NGOS PROVIDING CRITICAL SERVICES TO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES?

The Trump administration is targeting local NGOs through three main methods: (1) funding; (2) legal threats; and (3) federal agency rule changes. First, on February 6, 2025, the Trump administration released an Executive Order entitled "[Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies](#)" which directs agency heads throughout the federal government to review the funding they provide to NGOs and to ensure that these funds align with the national interest of the United States. Additionally, the Trump administration started to issue [stop-work orders](#) to organizations who receive US foreign aid funding, including organizations who provide refugee resettlement services. This action is currently being [challenged](#) in the US District Court of the Western District of Washington.

Second, on February 5, 2025, the Trump administration's new Attorney General Pam Bondi issued two memos directed at local NGOs that assist immigrants. The first memo on [Sanctuary Jurisdictions Directives](#) directs the Department of Justice to conduct a 60 day review on funding agreements with local NGOs that are determined to be assisting undocumented immigrants. During this time, funding will be paused and will only resume if the NGO certifies that they will act in compliance with federal laws. The second memo on [General Policy Regarding Charging, Plea Negotiations, and Sentencing](#) directs the DOJ to pursue all charges relating to [8 U.S.C. §§ 1324](#), which is commonly referred to as the harboring statute. Certain NGO activities [could be construed](#) to be "harboring" by aggressive prosecutors.

Finally, over the past couple weeks, the Trump administration's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has issued several agency memos and directives with the overall goal of restricting legal access and

representation for immigrants in immigration court. This is meaningful for many reasons, not least of which is the fact that many community members work through NGOs for legal service support and many of these outfits, with limited resources of their own, already have challenges navigating the immigration court systems. For example, memos have prevented legal service providers from providing [language access](#) and [general assistance](#) to immigrants in immigration court. Memos like these will make it harder for legal service providers to navigate the courts and will serve to prevent immigrants from receiving adequate and effective legal representation and make it harder for them to legally remain in the country.

## **IS THIS RELATED TO THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACKS ON SANCTUARY LOCALITIES?**

Like two sides of the same coin, the attacks on local service providers, like those on sanctuary localities, should be understood as part of a broader strategy to weaken and undermine trust in local institutions that serve as pillars of their communities. One example already unfolding is the Trump administration's attempt to cut federal funding for organizations that assist in the resettlement of refugees. Many of these organizations, which have operated for decades, provide indispensable services to recently arrived refugees fleeing difficult situations. While this measure is [being challenged in the courts](#), the loss of funding would severely hinder their ability to fulfill their missions and erode public trust in their capacity to serve their communities effectively.

Attacks on sanctuary jurisdictions along with local NGOs are all part of the Trump administration's anti-immigrant agenda. With fears surrounding mass deportation plans already [spreading](#) panic among the immigrant community, the Trump administration's attack on local NGOs and sanctuary jurisdictions will cut off vital and much relied upon assistance and protections for people caught in the mass deportation dragnet. This will lead to people having to choose between continuing to live in a more fearful environment or making the decision to return to their home countries, one of the ultimate goals of the Trump administration's anti-immigrant agenda.

## **HOW DOES THIS DOVETAIL WITH WHAT SOME STATES HAVE BEEN DOING IN RECENT YEARS?**

While the federal government under the Trump administration has just started its strategy of targeting sanctuary localities and NGOs, Republican-controlled states have already spent years employing the same tactics. A prime example is Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton who has sued multiple immigrant serving organizations such those providing [shelter](#), [direct services](#) and [advocacy organizations](#). These targeted attacks aimed to have the organizations turn over documents pertaining to who they have served and internal communications in an attempt to shut them down and prevent them from continuing their work helping recently arrived immigrants.

## **WHAT ARE THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE IMMIGRANTS THEY SERVE?**

The intentional escalation of attacks on local institutions from the federal government and anti-immigrant state governments is preventing them from being able to assist immigrants and in the process is eroding community trust. With the federal government commandeering the independence of localities and NGOs to make their own decisions, the objective is clear: turn all states, localities, and local institutions into fully cooperative immigration enforcement tools. This puts community trust at great risk. [Much research exists](#) that states that communities, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, are safer when public trust exists between themselves and entities like law enforcement. Being able to count on the community to be cooperative and willing to provide information is crucial in maintaining safety.

Additionally, the attacks on local immigrant serving NGOs as explained above do not only negatively impact the organizations themselves but also the immigrants they serve. Having the government demand that these organizations turn over information on who they have served is a direct attack at the trust these organizations

have with the immigrant community that would prevent them from doing their jobs. This is an attempt by the Trump administration and his allies to make it harder for immigrants to thrive in the US, force them to return to their home countries, and discourage future immigrants from trying to come to the US.

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROTECT IMMIGRANTS, LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, AND SANCTUARY JURISDICTIONS?**

At the local level, there has been some success in pushing back on federal encroachment through the courts. For example, following Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's lawsuit against Annunciation House in El Paso, the migrant shelter fought back and [received](#) a favorable ruling from a Texas state district court and as of January 2025, the case has [moved](#) to the Texas Supreme Court.

Work must be done to continue building community trust between local institutions and immigrant communities to reduce fear and uncertainty. Localities can look to successful models like California's [Immigration Services Funding Program](#) and Seattle's [Ready to Work Program](#) for how jurisdictions can successfully continue to serve their immigrant communities. Additionally, at the federal level, legislation such as [HR 32](#) aims to cut off all federal funding for sanctuary jurisdictions that will put at risk millions of Americans across the country. Working to prevent this bill from passing will protect many of the foundational services and benefits that Americans use in their everyday lives..