LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MICHIGAN

EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

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Members of the House Local Government Committee:

Welcoming the strangers within our midst—an ancient practice—is firmly embedded in the Judeo-Christian traditions that our Founders embraced. Indeed, welcoming strangers—immigrants, refuges, and migrants—to our shores constitutes a founding principle of our American democracy, a principle of equality proclaimed in our Declaration of Independence, and protected in our Constitution. Simply put, the full promise of our democracy and the robust economic vitality of our nation cannot be realized absent open borders that welcome those who are willing to work hard; to innovate; and to share. Welcoming communities strengthen these traditions, and ensure their continuity.

Today, many Americans fear immigrants, refuges, and seasonal workers. We are living in yet another historical era when nativist sentiment has overcome us; a time when immigration seems to have outpaced assimilation to pose an intractable policy dilemma. Yet, there is evidence otherwise.

We urge caution as you consider House Bill 4105 (H-1) and House Bill 4334 (H-1) and offer three reasons for doing so.

Welcoming communities are safer communities. Effective policing in communities rests on trust. Police-community relations rely on a social contract based on fairness, and freedom from fear. Law-abiding victims of crimes—for example, domestic assault, child abuse, and human trafficking victims—must know they can report crimes and their assailants without fearing threats of detention or deportation. In welcoming communities they can do so. When that social contract based on trust is violated, crime reporting goes down. Sources: 2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors, 4-25-17; "Latinos Are Afraid to Report Crimes as Debate Around Immigration Intensifies," Immigration Impact, 5-16-17.

Welcoming communities avoid lawsuits. In the United States, our Constitution prohibits the detention of people absent a judge's warrant of arrest based on probable cause of illegal acts. Detention, absent a neutral or judicial warrant, falls short. So, agreeing to hold an immigrant for 48-hours without a warrant invites a legal challenge. U.S. federal courts have upheld these challenges in several states. Municipalities whose criminal justice officials detain people absent the protections afforded them in our Constitution can incur the legal costs of these court challenges. Welcoming communities will avoid these costs. Source: "Sanctuary Cities and Immigration Detainers: A Primer," The Bipartisan Policy Center, 4-25-17.

Welcoming communities support local economies. In Michigan, our local tourism and agricultural economies depend upon seasonal workers, many of whom return each year for decades, often traveling as families. Visas for these workers are in short supply. Consequently, workers fear the threat of detention and deportation if they come to work in Michigan. In Leelanau County, some growers ask who will harvest their produce; on Mackinac Island, resorts are without adequate personnel. In welcoming communities, seasonal workers are able to work—to fill jobs American workers cannot or will not fill—at the invitation of small business and agricultural employers. Sources: "U.S. Immigration Shortfalls Come to Life on Mackinac Island," *Detroit Free Press*, 6-4-17; "Report on Agricultural Migrant/Seasonal Workers in Leelanau County 2013-1015," League of Women Voters Farm Labor Task Force Study Committee, 1-7-15.

In sum, The League of Women Voters of Michigan believes the evidence is clear that welcoming communities provide us, as Americans, with a vision for a more inclusive future; a vision resting on principles that have guided us throughout our history, as we have welcomed immigrants, refuges, and seasonal workers to join us, as we build a stronger democracy for all.

Sincerely,

Judy Karandjeff
President