



We Asked Mayors Of Sanctuary Cities About Trump's Plan To Relocate Migrants

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After contradicting his own officials multiple times, it seems that President Donald Trump is truly considering a plan to send migrants who cross the U.S.-Mexico border to sanctuary cities. In traditional fashion, the President presented the plan on Twitter on April 13, two days after the Washington Post reviewed emails saying as much, claiming that his administration would “have apprehended illegal immigrants transferred to Sanctuary Cities.” Also predictably, he has presented the plan as a form of punishment for the liberal cities, despite the local mayors and activists who are happy to welcome additional migrants — the very people, they say, who make their community better.

“It sounds like he thinks that we should react in fear of immigrants coming to our city and actually I think the immigrants in our city are a strength,” Marc McGovern, the mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts, told MTV News. A city with a current population of more than 100,000 people, Cambridge is one of multiple sanctuary cities in the state. “So I'm not quite sure why he thinks we should be scared of this.”

According to McGovern, there are a few main issues with the president’s tweet: It’s more of a political strategy than an actual policy, it’s being framed as a threat when in reality, migrants should be seen as a welcome addition to any community, and it further exacerbates the misunderstanding of what a sanctuary city is.

A sanctuary city is a city whose laws protect undocumented immigrants from deportation or prosecution in certain situations, according to Vox. For instance, McGovern explains, if an undocumented immigrant wants to report a crime or is pulled over for speeding, their immigration status is not brought into question. However, if anyone is arrested for a crime, their immigration status will be checked; in that instance, undocumented people would be turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, even in a sanctuary city.

Trump’s tweet called for “placing illegal immigrants in sanctuary cities only,” but sanctuary cities don’t have anything forcing people to stay within their city limits. According to the Washington Post, once immigrants enter the country, they tend to travel to nearly every corner and city, no matter where they originally settled: They head towards family, or towards work, or move for a myriad of other reasons.

“It doesn't even make sense,” McGovern said, exhausted. “So he's going to round up who? And send them to our city, and then what? ... I mean what does he think? They're going to come to

Cambridge and we're just going to wall them all in? No. They're going to come to Cambridge and some will stay and some will go to Somerville and some will go to Boston.”

This makes it painfully obvious that the stance – and potential policy – that Trump is outlining in his tweets is more of a political strategy to reinforce his dangerous rhetoric about immigrants than an actual policy that could realistically go into effect.

“It's hard, often, to discern a policy from a tweet. It's a nonsense thing to have said,” the executive director of Immigration Equality, Aaron C. Morris, told MTV News, adding that, in theory, the administration could move immigrants into major progressive cities, but the details are far from clear. “Does that mean that [the president] would just sort of open a bus door in the middle of Times Square? I don't know. It seems unlikely to me.”

Unfortunately, because of how it incites his base, Trump othering immigrants is nothing new. He's described people who cross the Southern border as dangerous gang members and animals, a form of dehumanizing discourse that experts warn could lead the way to genocidal thinking. “They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists,” Trump said in his 2015 presidential announcement speech, adding, “and some, I assume, are good people.” Undocumented immigrants are considerably less likely to commit crime than native-born citizens, according to the CATO Institute, and many of the people making the arduous trek north to flee persecution, human rights violations, armed conflicts, or other crises or violence, according to Amnesty International.

“Unfortunately, the president's plan demonstrates the utter contempt that he and his Administration has for basic human dignity and the core values on which this nation was founded,” Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney told MTV News in an email interview. “I am offended – but frankly, not surprised, as this president has demonstrated time and again his desire to flout the rule of law to appease his political base – as he does today in proudly tweeting about the idea. To use people as tools for political retribution, without an iota of concern for their health and well being, is disgraceful.”

Overall, sanctuary cities are proud of the additions immigrants make to their cities – and if Trump's tweet did somehow become a policy, migrant people would likely be placed in communities that would welcome them, surrounded by people who are helping them succeed in their new homes. That's a vast improvement upon the current detention, which advocacy groups have decried for their inhumane practices. And, sure, studies have proven how immigration helps bolster an economy — but the people MTV News spoke with view the work they do as the benefit in and of itself, regardless of material outcome.

“Accepting refugees is not a burden,” Morris said. “It's a privilege.”