

Bolanos made the right decision

Beth von Emster

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I agree with Sheriff Bolanos' decision last week changing department policy to stop cooperating with federal immigration authorities. Our community is healthier and safer for it.

In my work with the San Mateo County Coalition for Immigrant Rights, I have gotten to know families impacted by the old policy of ICE transfers. The people transferred to ICE do not exist in isolation. They frequently are breadwinners who leave behind U.S. citizen children, spouses and parents who rely on them for financial and emotional support. The entire community is impacted as well by the family's urgent financial needs and psychological trauma in the wake of an ICE transfer.

The old policy was dangerous. The sheriff had to rely on ICE to verify immigration status, and ICE regularly gets it wrong. A CATO Institute study estimates that ICE has wrongly targeted approximately 20,000 U.S. citizens for ICE detention or deportation. It also was counterproductive; the presence of ICE erodes trust and confidence in ALL law enforcement, making victims less likely to report crime.

Nearly every other Bay Area county has stopped making ICE transfers. Our county now joins them in improving our collective wellness. I look forward to seeing the decision reflected in the Sheriff's Office policy manual and urge the Board of Supervisors to reinforce their unanimous support for this policy change by passing a resolution.

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