



# Department of Justice

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**STATEMENT OF**

**R. ANDREW MURRAY  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**FOR A HEARING ENTITLED**

**“SANCTUARY JURISDICTIONS: THE IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
AND VICTIMS”**

**PRESENTED ON**

**OCTOBER 22, 2019**

**Statement of**

**R. Andrew Murray  
United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina  
Department of Justice**

**Before the  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate**

**Entitled  
Sanctuary Jurisdictions: The Impact on Public Safety and Victims  
October 22, 2019**

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, and other distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the challenges faced by law enforcement in jurisdictions with sanctuary policies.

Over the past several decades, lawmakers in a number of states and municipalities have enacted laws intended to limit police involvement in federal immigration enforcement activities. These sanctuary policies protect known criminal aliens who have been arrested for committing crimes unrelated to their immigration status.

I currently serve as the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina which encompasses the City of Charlotte. As U.S. Attorney, and previously as the District Attorney for Charlotte, I've witnessed firsthand the devastating impact that sanctuary policies can have on the community. I've seen how these policies destroy the lives of innocent victims and their families.

There are two very recent cases in Charlotte that serve as unfortunate examples of the clear threat to public safety that such policies pose. In May, Mr. Pineda-Anchecta was arrested not once, but twice, by local law enforcement for assaulting a female, strangulation, and kidnapping, among other offenses. Each time Pineda-Anchecta was arrested, ICE filed a detainer with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office requesting that he be held in custody so that immigration officers could have a reasonable period of time to determine his true identity and immigration status. Each time, the federal detainer was ignored by the Sheriff's office, and Pineda-Anchecta was released without ICE being notified. Prior to his second arrest by the police, Pineda-Anchecta engaged in an hours-long standoff at an apartment complex with a Charlotte police SWAT team, potentially exposing many innocent bystanders and law enforcement officers to serious harm. After Pineda-Anchecta was released from state custody a second time, he allegedly strangled, restrained and kidnapped the same victim from the first crime. He was eventually located and arrested by ICE, following an intensive and exhaustive search. At the time of his arrest by ICE, Pineda-Anchecta and another individual were sitting in a vehicle, with a readily available pistol and ammunition.

A second example is Leonardo Pacheco, a Honduran citizen and a repeat immigration violator, who was arrested in June by local law enforcement, for the alleged first degree rape of an eleven-year-old child. Once again, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office ignored an ICE detainer and the defendant was released from jail the day after his arrest. Nearly two months later, during a targeted enforcement operation, ICE was able to take the defendant into federal custody. For nearly two months, as a result of the Sheriff's reckless sanctuary

policy, the defendant was free to potentially harm other innocent and helpless children.

Over a recent nine-month period, there were at least 23 other foreign nationals who had been released back to the community as a result of the local Sheriff's refusal to comply with ICE detainers. Among those released are individuals charged with serious criminal offenses, such as sex offenses, serious assaults, kidnappings and attempted murder, to name a few. Some of these individuals are still at-large despite law enforcement's best efforts to locate and arrest them.

This is just part of a growing list of unlawfully present criminal aliens who could have been arrested and removed from the United States. Yet, current sanctuary policies allow them to remain in this country, at the expense of the safety of our communities and our law enforcement.

Unfortunately, what I have witnessed in North Carolina is not unique - innocent men, women and children are becoming victims of preventable crimes across the country every day due to sanctuary policies.

The American people deserve a lawful immigration system that keeps us safe and serves our national interest. The Department of Justice is committed to supporting all of our nation's state, local, and tribal law enforcement, and to working with anyone who seeks to protect our communities from violent criminals.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing on such an important issue. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.