

Constituent Questions on Immigration

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I am hearing a lot of news about changes in immigration laws. Are there changes in immigration law that are putting immigrants at greater risk of deportation or that affect whether a friend/relative/neighbor may care for a child in case the parent is deported?

The new president recently announced certain new “priorities” about the kinds of immigrants who may face a greater risk of immigration arrest and removal, including people who have prior removal orders, but the details of how these priorities will be applied in practice are not yet known. **Anyone who is fearful of being deported should be in contact with an attorney.** Massachusetts has many legal services programs that provide free consultations to those who do not have an attorney. The program may not be able to take the case but can often at least provide reliable advice about what to expect. Planning for the custody of children, including someone else’s child, also requires reliable legal advice. An individual, confidential appointment with a lawyer about all the circumstances is necessary.

The easiest website to find help is Mass Legal Help:

<http://www.masslegalhelp.org>

The local legal services for immigration are also listed on the government website.

<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers-map>

Information, including updates on new policies being adopted by the president, can be found at the national immigration lawyers’ website:

<http://www.aila.org/advo-media/issues/immigration-2017-a-new-president-and-congress#ADVO>

What are sanctuary cities and how do they affect immigrants?

Some cities and town in Massachusetts are known as “safe communities” or “sanctuary cities” and there is proposed state legislation known as the “Safe Communities Act.” The main idea behind safe communities is that police in a town or city will enforce laws that address actual crimes and not divert state or local resources into enforcing civil immigration laws for which the federal government is responsible. This emphasizes the role of police as a resource for crime victims and witnesses to report crimes without worrying that they will get in trouble with immigration.

For more information, contact American Immigration Lawyers Association New England Massachusetts Legislative Relations Liaison, Jennifer Cameron: attorneyjennifercameron@gmail.com.

If I have another immigration question or problem, where can I go for help?

Go to www.masslegalhelp.org/immigration. For a list of immigration specialists, see www.masslegalhelp.org/immigration/specialists.

*This information is general in nature and not intended as legal advice. Generally the income eligibility limit for legal aid is 125% of the federal poverty line (or \$591 per week for a family of four in 2017), **although there are certain hardship exceptions.** Call if you are uncertain whether you qualify. **Because their funding is limited, legal aid programs cannot serve all eligible callers.***