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Richmond City Council

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Richmond City Council Cuts off ICE Data Vendors from City Business on June 5

Richmond—On June 5, the Richmond City Council enacted a contracting and investment ordinance that will prevent the city's business and investment funds from going to data broker companies that share personally identifying information with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or participate in the Trump Administration's "extreme vetting" program. Last night's vote was the second and final required reading of the ordinance to become law.

Sponsored by Councilmembers Jovanka Beckles and Ada Recinos, the Sanctuary City Contracting and Investment Ordinance was developed by a 20-organization coalition working under the name #DeportICE (www.deportice.org). The coalition's work focuses on strengthening immigrant protections in the Bay Area's sanctuary cities by eliminating loopholes and assisting local governments with sanctuary policies from indirectly subsidizing or cooperating with the Trump Administration's aggressive civil immigration enforcement ramp-up.

"As a Black Latina immigrant, I have witnessed and experienced the challenges faced by our immigrant community. As a Richmond City Council Member, I was proud to introduce this ordinance to uphold our commitment to protect both undocumented community members and our city policies. We must prevent contractors from sharing information of immigrants to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Other cities are in the process of reviewing their policies," said Councilmember Beckles. The cities of Alameda, Berkeley, and Oakland are considering the same ordinance.

Mike Katz-Lacabe of Oakland Privacy, which anchors the #DeportICE coalition, commented: "One way to fight the deportation machinery and protect our friends and neighbors is to stop feeding that machinery with data collected by local law enforcement."

"Sanctuary cities should not be contracting with or profiting from such data broker companies that engage with ICE or 'extreme vetting' programs that put vulnerable communities at risk," says Sameena Usman, Government Relations Coordinator for the Council on American Islamic Relations-SF Bay Area, another member of the #DeportICE coalition. "These programs are a serious threat to due process, civil liberties, and would inevitably chill free speech."

The coalition's work is based on the belief that the combination of Big Data and the xenophobic dog-whistles of the Trump Administration is potentially leading the United States into a hi-tech echo of the conditions that led to the domestic detention of Japanese-Americans and the concentration camps of fascist Germany which ended in the mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and resistance dissenters in Europe in the 1940's.

"When it comes to private business practices, the Constitution isn't always helpful. Much like existing anti-nuclear weapon or border wall contractor prohibition ordinances here in the Bay Area, this Sanctuary City Contracting ordinance provides local elected officials with a tool to disincentivize or change private behavior. If these vendors want our taxpayer dollars, they need to align with our values. We are extremely grateful that Councilmembers Beckles and Recinos, and the Richmond City Council as a whole, recognized the need for such laws", said Brian Hofer of #DeportICE and chair of Oakland's Privacy Commission.

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