

Lets join together in declaring Bedford, NY to be a Welcoming and Inclusive Township

As concerned citizens who love our community, we would like to petition our Town Board to adopt practices generally considered to be 'Sanctuary City' policies.

We are aware that the Governor has already declared ours a Sanctuary State, but we are also very aware that many Latinos and Muslims who live here are increasingly and reasonably concerned and frightened for their safety and security.

It is well known that residents face the possibility of restrictions and deportations under current or future immigration enforcement policies, including those that may be implemented by the President.

The President has threatened to revoke many of President Obama's executive orders including those concerning immigration, such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which creates an exception from deportation orders and helps undocumented youth brought to the US as children to obtain work permits. He has also proposed the creation of a dedicated task force to detain and deport undocumented US residents, and to employ existing law enforcement to carry out deportations on a large scale.

Today we are all confronted with a moral imperative to protect vulnerable populations in the event that forces move against them unfairly or immorally. This requires us to make clear that we will not participate with immoral laws and their execution against these members of our community. We should declare that we will refuse to report the names or other information about our community members, to turn them over to authorities, or otherwise aid in their persecution. As Americans, we must say no to another round of McCarthyism, turning one American against another due to paranoia and hysteria.

We need to be mindful of the power of symbolic gestures and actions and believe that declaring Bedford a Sanctuary City would both help to educate the populace at large relative to the destructiveness of nativist impulses and xenophobic expressions, as well as provide some measure of reassurance to many of our neighbors who currently feel under siege.

RESOLUTION: REAFFIRMING BEDFORD AS A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE TOWNSHIP FORMALLY ADOPTING PRACTICES GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE 'SANCTUARY CITY' POLICIES.

WHEREAS, the Township of Bedford values diversity; and WHEREAS, the Township of Bedford has, from the time a Chief Katonah considered itself a township that welcomes immigrants; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Bedford is committed to upholding and protecting the civil and human rights of all individuals within the Township and has long prohibited discrimination based on race, ethnicity,

WHEREAS, it is particularly essential to the mission of the Township's emergency services departments that victims report crimes or injuries, cooperate fully in investigations, and summon help when needed; and

WHEREAS, the threat of deportation or prosecution for no reason other than immigration status may discourage residents without legal immigration status or who have family members or friends without legal immigration status from reporting crimes or injuries, cooperating in investigations, seeking opportunities for their children living in this community, or summoning help when needed; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of federal immigration laws is the prerogative of federal enforcement agencies, not local law enforcement agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Bedford Police Department has long held to the practice that it does not inquire into a person's immigration status upon initial contact; and

WHEREAS, the Bedford Police Department has long determined that it will give full priority to public safety and justice concerns in preference over rigid enforcement of immigration regulations; and

WHEREAS, the Bedford Police Department will develop policies and procedures as to if and when undocumented foreign nationals will be referred to the appropriate federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Bedford has no formal existing agreements to enforce immigration policy; and

WHEREAS, no other Town department inquires into the immigration status of individuals before making government services available to that individual; and

WHEREAS, these practices are generally considered to be "Sanctuary City" policies; and

WHEREAS, the the Bedford Supervisor has reaffirmed the township's commitment to be welcoming and inclusive to all and supports codifying these Township's long-standing practices into Town policy; and

WHEREAS, federal law does not require local law enforcement or other local service providers to inquire into an individual's immigration status or to respond to federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainer requests so that these principles are not inconsistent with federal law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Bedford Town Board also reaffirms the Township of Bedford commitment to continue its longstanding and legal practice of not inquiring into the immigration status of individuals being provided local government services.

This petition will be delivered to:

- Bedford Town Board