

Bishops disappointed by House passage of SB 4, “anti-sanctuary cities” legislation

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Law will have negative impact on migrants in Texas

AUSTIN — The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops (TCCB) is disappointed by the Texas House’s vote to pass SB 4, which will punish local police officers if they do not fully cooperate with detainer requests issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). SB 4 would also allow local peace officers to inquire into the legal status of people who are arrested or detained.

The bishops commented on the last-minute amendment which allows police to inquire into the status of detained persons, in addition to those who are arrested: “We are deeply disappointed that the House revised SB 4 to include people who have committed no crime that merits arrest or citation,” said Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin, who also serves as chair of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration and Refugee Services. “This will not help peace officers build trust with the migrant community, which is critical to keeping all our communities safe.”

Acknowledging governments have the right and responsibility to maintain their borders, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese added, “Immigration law should be enforced in a way that is targeted, proportional and humane. This bill does not meet the standard.”

“Immigrants who come to this country to work or to flee violence are not a threat to our safety,” explained Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of the San Antonio Archdiocese. “Sadly, this legislation will suppress their ability to contribute to our society and economy, and as a matter of principle, the unity of families must be safeguarded.”

The bishops expressed gratitude for the legislators who lead the opposition to the bill, as well as Catholics and others from throughout the state who opposed it. “Thousands of Catholics joined with fellow Texans to testify, rally and encourage their representatives to stop this legislation,” explained Jennifer Carr Allmon, executive director of the TCCB. “We thank those who have taken a principled stance in solidarity with immigrants, and who have worked so hard in this cause.”