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Former Miami Police Chief to Florida Legislature: Anti-Immigrant bills 'threaten public safety'

MIAMI – With only a week to go before the session's end, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center and the ACLU of Florida released a letter from former City of Miami Police Chief John F. Timoney warning every Representative and Senator that passing any Arizona-style bill will jeopardize public safety.

"I am very concerned about the potential impact that two bills (HB 7089 and SB 2040) could have on the effectiveness of local police and public safety," Mr. Timoney wrote. "It has been my experience (and that of many other police professionals) that maintaining the trust of immigrants is essential to protecting the public, solving crimes and keeping the peace."

When that trust is broken, immigrants, regardless of status, will not cooperate with police. This will make it more difficult to prevent and investigate crimes. Mr. Timoney's letter is attached and on web <http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/TimoneyLetter-042911.pdf>

"We hope the Legislature considers this urgent message from one of the nation's most experienced law enforcement officials – someone who knows about public safety in diverse communities," Cheryl Little, Executive Director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center and Howard Simon, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida, said in a joint statement.

Both the House and Senate are still weighing these Arizona-inspired bills. In addition to threatening public safety, these bills would also devastate Florida's tourism and agriculture industries. Arizona already has experienced such economic damage, even though major parts of its anti-immigrant law have been blocked by federal courts.

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