



Billy Walsh <bwalsh@natickma.org>

Immigrant Welcome policy

1 message

'Rolf Larson' via Select Board <selectboard@natickma.org>

Fri, Nov 29, 2024 at 1:05 PM

Reply-To: Rolf Larson <racslarson@verizon.net>

To: Selectboard@natickma.org

Dear Members of the Board,

First I want to thank each member of the Select Board for your service. I was so impressed at the meeting I attended on 11/20 by the calm, thoughtful, steady leadership you provided on so many issues before the board. I feel very grateful to have such dedicated people leading our town.

I am a resident of Natick and am writing again to urge you to vote to adopt the Welcoming Immigration Policy discussed at the Board's meeting on November 20. The policy is thoroughly vetted, compliant with the law, and provides peace of mind to Natick's residents and visitors of all immigration statuses.

As someone who is involved in supporting new immigrants in our community, I know firsthand how much they are able to contribute to our town. I also understand many of the challenges they face as our state and federal governments propose policies that will make their lives more difficult. Immigrants need to feel that they are supported by their communities and that they can freely access services they may need without fear.

Sadly, the statewide Republican Party has decided to use the Board's consideration of this carefully drafted policy as an opportunity to push a national anti-immigrant political agenda, and I know the Board has been flooded with inflammatory form letters and social media posts raising alarmist talking points about the policy. The reality is right there in black and white, so I know that what this policy would do is very clear and very modest: it would prohibit town employees from asking people about their immigration status or enforcing federal immigration law except where state or federal law requires them to do so. As Members of the Board and the Police Chief pointed out at the meeting, this is simply a codification of existing practice and makes sense from a law enforcement, practical, and moral standpoint.

It is worth reiterating what the policy would NOT do:

- It would NOT prevent anyone, regardless of immigration status, from being arrested, charged, or convicted for any crime.
- It would NOT provide any monetary or other benefits to undocumented people. It would cost nothing.
- It would NOT prevent ICE from enforcing federal immigration law in Natick—it provides no sanctuary.
- It would NOT prevent the police from cooperating with ICE or other federal law enforcement authorities. The policy contains no restrictions on communications with ICE—the only paragraph about communication is paragraph 1, which *requires* the town to share information with ICE under certain circumstances.

The state party's talking points warn of dire consequences that go well beyond the text of the policy, such as an influx of undocumented people using town resources or a sudden spike in crime. Yet, we don't have to speculate because Natick

is far from the first municipality in Massachusetts to adopt a similar policy. For example, as a Member of the Board pointed out during the meeting, this policy is modeled on Acton's policy, which was adopted over seven years ago, in October of 2017. Since that time, Acton has not seen a spike in crime or an unexpected surge in population. You could likely find versions of that story in every municipality that has adopted these policies—the scare tactics and anecdotes fall apart in the face of actual world facts.

As much as the statewide Republican Party wants to make this a statewide or even national issue, this has always been about All of Us in Natick and our values. As Select Board Members repeatedly pointed out, this policy results from a multi-year process that has engaged stakeholders from many perspectives and aspects of town government. It's time to finish the job and not let political attacks get in the way of doing what's right.

Please vote to support the policy at your upcoming meeting.

Thank you,

Celeste Larson
[53 Speen St., Natick](#)