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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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White Plains (Monday, August 7, 2017)

Westchester Legislators Vote to Pass Immigrant Protection Act

The County of Board Legislators voted in favor today of passing an act that protects residents' confidential information, regardless of immigration status, and prevents limited county resources from being used for immigration enforcement.

The Westchester Immigrant Protection Act, which has bipartisan support and fully complies with federal law, regulates the voluntary cooperation between county agencies and federal immigration agents, and ensures they cannot act as federal immigration officials. It is now up to County Executive Rob Astorino to either sign the act into law or veto it.

[Studies](#) have long shown that immigrants are more reluctant to report crime when they fear that police are acting as immigration agents. The Trump administration's indiscriminate and aggressive immigration crackdown has led to [dramatic decreases in crime reporting](#) among immigrants across the country. This decrease makes criminals harder to catch, endangering the safety of all local residents.

The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), which worked in collaboration with its members in the area and Westchester legislators on the act, joined community members and advocates in front of the Westchester Government Building to rally for its passage.

"Westchester County legislators took a step towards ensuring their community is truly a welcoming place for all of their residents today by voting in favor of this legislation," said **Charlotte Gossett, Senior Manager of Member Engagement at the New York Immigration Coalition**. "But this is just the beginning. We hope that County Executive Rob Astorino will protect the safety of his constituents by signing this legislation into law, making Westchester the first county in the state to do so. We will continue to work with our members and partners on fair policies that protect the rights and dignity of all people in New York."

"We are deeply gratified to have the support of the majority of the Westchester Board of Legislators for the Immigrant Protection Act," said **Carola Baracco of Neighbors Link**. "While it may be passed with amendments, we are confident that the spirit of this legislation will be retained. In addition, we are hopeful that County Executive, Rob Astorino will uphold the will of our elected representatives and sign this important legislation into law."

"We celebrate the passage of the Westchester County Immigrant Protection Act by the Board of Legislators. This marks an important victory for our community, by drawing a bright line between immigrant enforcement and local law enforcement - for the benefit of all of us," said **Graciela Heymann, Executive Director, Westchester Hispanic Coalition**. "While the Trump administration is sowing fear in our communities, we are proud that our Legislators came together to protect immigrant families and keep all Westchester residents safe. We now urge County Executive Astorino to sign this Act into law as quickly as possible."

"Our union enthusiastically endorses the Westchester Immigrant Protection Act as a vital tool for reinforcing the bonds of trust between the county's vibrant immigrant communities and our local law enforcement," said **John Santos, Vice President of 32BJ SEIU Hudson Valley**. "The act ensures that local law enforcement concentrates on public safety first, and that immigrants feel comfortable helping local authorities prevent and solve crime, thereby making Westchester safer for everybody."

"With this action, the Westchester Board of Legislators makes Westchester the first County in the State of New York to enact a clear and consistent policy that prioritizes enforcement of state and local law, and ensures equal treatment of everyone in the County regardless of status or citizenship. Let us hope that other Counties find this example encouraging and instructive," said **Vanessa Merton, Professor of Law and Director of the Immigration Justice Clinic at Pace Law School**.

View photos of the rally [here](#).

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The New York Immigration Coalition is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for nearly 200 groups in New York State that work with immigrants and refugees. The NYIC aims to achieve a fairer and more just society that values the contributions of immigrants and extends opportunity to all by promoting immigrants' full civic participation, fostering their leadership, and providing a unified voice and a vehicle for collective action for New York's diverse immigrant communities.

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