



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Michael T. Dougherty, District Attorney

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Press Release

The District Attorney's Office is pleased to announce the signing of House Bill 21-1057 by Governor Jared Polis on May 20, 2021. The bill prohibits the extortion of immigrants for engaging in lawful acts. This bill will close a loophole that the DA's Office found existed in the current extortion statute.

In 2006, the Legislature made it a crime to threaten a person with immigration consequences to induce the person to give them money or a thing of value. However, that crime was limited only to financial threats, while the broader extortion statute does not have such a financial limitation. This year's bill will bring the threat of immigration consequences in line with the broader extortion statute and include inducing a person to either commit or refrain from committing a lawful act. **This will cover circumstances such as wage theft and a domestic violence victim being threatened by an abuser to not call the police for fear of the abuser reporting to immigration officials.**

Immigrants in our communities are particularly vulnerable to crimes like fraud, wage theft, crimes of violence, and hate crimes. Unfortunately, many immigrants are less likely to report crimes when they occur, either out of fear of the criminal justice system or a lack of familiarity with the reporting process. Improvements to our programs for helping immigrants have a meaningful impact on public safety. A National Institute of Justice study found that immigrant populations were more comfortable reporting crimes in cities where their communities were included in the fabric of civic life, and where programs existed to serve their needs.

District Attorney Michael Dougherty stated, "This new law is directly in line with our office's priority on community safety, as well as immigrant protection. Further, it is consistent with the focus that this office has placed on our U-Visa program, the passage of the bill to increase penalties for wage theft in 2019, and the protection of our vulnerable populations. Christian Gardner-Wood, the Director of the DA Community Protection Division, was the driving force behind this important effort. I am proud that Christian and our office helped draft this bill and worked closely with the Colorado District Attorney's Council and our state partners to get it passed into law. It is a great step."