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New Study Finds Texas Immigration Law Has Harmful Health Effects

Findings support law enforcement practices that prioritize family unity

ALTON, TX—A new study released today finds strong evidence that Texas's controversial immigration law, SB4, has harmful health effects to mixed-status families.¹ An estimated 1,800 U.S.-born children in the Rio Grande Valley had a parent deported by immigration officials in 2017. Local police played a role in many of these forced family separations through their collaboration with immigration officials.

The study is a localized update to a 2013 Health Impact Assessment conducted by [Human Impact Partners \(HIP\)](#), which found that the threat of detention and deportation deeply affects children's health and well being, including for US citizen kids. For the latest research, HIP partnered with La Unión del Pueblo Entero to assess the health consequences of Texas requiring local law enforcement to work with federal immigration officials (the basic tenant of SB4).

"Parents and kids are terrified that a small lapse while driving could lead to deportation and dramatically affect their family's health and well-being," said Jonathan Heller, co-director of Human Impact Partners. Survey findings in the report show that:

- 63% of undocumented respondents in the Valley reported fear of driving because of their immigration status
- 50% of undocumented parents in the Valley reported symptoms of separation anxiety in their child
- 40% of undocumented parents in the Valley reported symptoms of school avoidance anxiety in their child

"Police chiefs and city elected officials can be a force that defends the wellbeing of children while also ensuring access to justice and equal protection for all of us," said Martha Sanchez, Community Organizing Coordinator with La Unión del Pueblo Entero. "This research shows how inaction on the part of our public officials is harming our families. As a result of the study, we have put forward policy recommendations that can be implemented swiftly and within the legal constraints created by SB4. Public officials should implement these good policies for the health and safety of our families."

The research findings come from in-depth-interviews, focus groups, and a survey of more than 200 Rio Grande Valley residents, along with a review of existing research and quantitative estimates of those affected in the Valley.

The report uses a public health approach in its policy recommendations, to ensure both the safety and health of Rio Grande Valley residents. Policy recommendations in the report include:

1. Prioritize local police resources toward local law enforcement issues instead of assisting immigration officials
2. Increase use of “cite and release” practices during standard traffic stops
3. Accept alternative forms of identification for traffic stop procedures

For the full report, visit FamilyUnityFamilyHealth.org.

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¹ Mixed-status family: Defined in this report as one that includes: 1) at least one child who is a citizen or has protected status as an immigrant, and 2) at least one parent who is an undocumented immigrant.

About La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)

La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) is a nonprofit organization that helps the community organize for and win a better quality of life. LUPE was founded in 1989 by farmworker and civil rights leaders Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta. We are a membership-based organization and our strength is found in the participation of our over eight thousand members. LUPE is a member organization of the RGV Equal Voice Network. Learn more about LUPE online at www.lupenet.org

About Human Impact Partners (HIP)

Human Impact Partners (HIP) is a national nonprofit public health organization. It is one of the few organizations in the US conducting health impacts research with an explicit focus on public policies and practices that affect community health beyond healthcare systems. Learn more about HIP online at <http://humanimpact.org/>