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Report Rips ICE on Enforcement

By Lee Ransom

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported people who had no criminal history and posed no threat to the public or national security, according to a report by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The report, "Immigration Enforcement Off Target: Minor Offenses With Major Consequences," is a compilation of 200 cases nationwide of immigrant clients who were arrested by local law enforcement and eventually detained by ICE.

According to the report, released Tuesday, nine of those clients were from Pennsylvania, two were deported, one left voluntarily and six cases are pending - including one in Philadelphia.

"What we hope the report points out is that ICE needs to make the rhetoric match reality," AILA secretary William Stock said. "Secure Communities has to mean ICE follows deportation priorities and not taking anyone who could potentially be charged with a crime."

On June 23, City Council voted 17-0 to end the city's participation in the Secure Communities program, which comes up for renewal Aug. 31. The program, aimed at combating terrorism, requires local police to share fingerprint data of all arrestees with federal immigration authorities.

Mayoral spokesman Mark McDonald said city officials will meet with ICE to discuss concerns.

The city's 2008 agreement, designed to enforce immigration laws and to facilitate deportations through ICE and state and local law-enforcement agencies, has been criticized by city officials and immigrant organizations.