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**Groups Rally to Stop “Secure Communities” on Program’s 1-Year Anniversary in NY State**

New York, NY (May 18, 2011) – A wide coalition of immigrants and advocates, joined by politicians and other supporters, rallied in front of Governor Cuomo’s Manhattan office today to demand an immediate end to a mass deportation program that New York signed into effect exactly one year ago.

“We have no time to lose,” declared City Council Member Daniel Dromm. “On this first anniversary of S-Comm, we need Gov. Cuomo to take immediate action to demonstrate that New York is a place where immigrants don’t lose their rights just because they have been accused or convicted of a crime.”

“The Governor has a unique opportunity to correct past wrongs,” said Michelle Fei, one of the event organizers. “New York cannot stand for a program that funnels immigrants into an unjust deportation system while jeopardizing our safety and violating our rights.”

The call for Cuomo to quickly end the program comes as a rising tide of opposition to the ICE deportation program is sweeping across the state and country. Recently, U.S. Representative Zoe Lofgren, joined by Sen. Robert Menendez, called for an investigation of ICE and S-Comm, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus urged Pres. Obama to stop S-Comm. On May 5, Illinois Governor Quinn rescinded that state’s S-Comm agreement. A group of 38 New York legislators sent a letter urging Gov. Cuomo to terminate NY’s S-Comm on May 9. And just this week, both the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force and U.S. Congress Members José E. Serrano and Nydia Velázquez sent letters to Cuomo in support of the program’s termination.

“Gov. Cuomo must step up if he wants New York to continue to be a leader for immigrant rights,” said Manisha Vaze, another event organizer. “Our communities are getting ripped apart, and Cuomo has the power to stop this devastation by simply ending the agreement.”

Under S-Comm, local police are forced to automatically forward the fingerprints of every arrested person to federal immigration databases. The program aims to transfer people suspected of being deportable directly into the detention and deportation system. Locked up in detention centers, advocates say, immigrants have severely limited access to lawyers, medical care, family, witnesses, and evidence to defend against deportation.

S-Comm now covers nearly 1300 jurisdictions across 42 states. It is currently active in 24 New York counties. In January and February alone, the program identified nearly 3,500 immigrants for potential deportation.

“We hope Gov. Cuomo will respond to our communities’ fears and frustration,” said Mizue Aizeki from the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights and another event coordinator. “Ending S-Comm now is the only right solution.”

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The New York State Working Group Against Deportation is a broad coalition of domestic violence, immigrant rights, family services, labor, faith-based, civil rights, and community-based organizations that aims to stop Secure Communities and other deportation programs. Through the Working Group, over 80 organizations, 130 faith leaders, and 40 elected officials have joined together to urge Governor Cuomo to terminate New York’s S-Comm agreement with ICE. Call Families for Freedom at (646) 290-5551 for more information about the rally; contact Michelle Fei (mfei@immigrantdefenseproject.org, (484) 464-3664) or Mizue Aizeki (maizeki@nmcir.org) for more information about S-Comm and the campaign to stop S-Comm.