ICE RESPONSE from Patrick D. Contreras, field office director in Houston

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) recognizes that it is imperative for crime victims and witnesses to come forward. The agency works closely with state and local law enforcement to see that foreign nationals who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking crimes are informed about the availability of special visas to enable them to remain in the United States. Additionally, the fact that someone is the victim or witness to a significant crime is a factor ICE prominently considers when weighing how to proceed in a particular case.

ICE’s enforcement actions have not changed, they continue to be targeted and lead-driven, prioritizing individuals who pose a risk to our communities. The agency’s officers and agents conduct themselves in accordance with their authorities under federal law and the Constitution. In fiscal year 2017 to date, the Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) in Houston, Texas, has arrested 6,811 criminal aliens subject to either a final order of removal or to removal proceedings. ERO also issued 4,842 immigration detainers, which effectively reduces the crime rate by removing habitual offenders from community.

The inference that the agency’s execution of its mission is undermining public safety is reckless and creating fear within the communities. ICE and all law enforcement agencies have the primary goal of protecting the public by combatting crime. As such, ICE looks forward to working with officials in Houston and other jurisdictions across the country in the future on this important issue.