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Justice Department Names 35 Sanctuary Jurisdictions, Pledges Legal Action to Enforce Immigration Law

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The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released a list of 35 sanctuary jurisdictions on Tuesday, committing to intensify legal efforts against states and local governments that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. The list, published in line with a recent executive order from President Donald Trump, identifies jurisdictions the department considers non-compliant with federal immigration enforcement.

In a public statement, Attorney General Pam Bondi criticized these policies, saying, “Sanctuary policies impede law enforcement and put American citizens at risk by design. The Department of Justice will continue bringing litigation against sanctuary jurisdictions

and work closely with the Department of Homeland Security to eradicate these harmful policies around the country.”

Twelve states were named in the list, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia. In addition, specific counties such as Baltimore County in Maryland, Cook County in Illinois, San Diego County and San Francisco County in California were identified. The list also includes 18 cities, spanning from Seattle to Philadelphia.

The release of the list follows President Trump’s executive order in April directing the DOJ to publish jurisdictions that “obstruct the enforcement of Federal immigration laws.” The order mandates that the department notify each jurisdiction of its alleged defiance and, if no corrective action is taken, pursue all necessary legal remedies to bring them into compliance with federal law.

The DOJ has already taken legal steps under this directive. In July, it filed a lawsuit against New York City over its sanctuary policies, which limit communication and cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration officials. Additional lawsuits may follow as the DOJ increases pressure on jurisdictions maintaining similar policies.

Republican lawmakers have also increased scrutiny of sanctuary jurisdictions in recent congressional hearings. During several committee sessions, GOP members questioned Democratic mayors and governors over local laws that hinder federal immigration enforcement, arguing that such policies undermine national security and the rule of law.

Sanctuary jurisdictions typically adopt policies that limit cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), particularly regarding detention requests or the sharing of immigration status information. Supporters argue these policies build trust between immigrant communities and local authorities, while critics say they create gaps in enforcement that endanger public safety.

With the Justice Department’s latest move, the federal government is reinforcing its stance that immigration enforcement should be uniform across all jurisdictions. Legal battles are expected to continue as state and local governments defend their policies in court.