

Media Release

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More than 110 Organizations Demand Governor Ferguson Stop Driver and Vehicle Data Sharing Connected to Immigration Arrests

New UW research documents over 350 immigration arrests last year linked to ICE having access to Washington Department of Licensing records.

SEATTLE, WA — More than 100 organizations across Washington have called on Governor Bob Ferguson to take immediate action to prevent state driver and vehicle information from being used to facilitate federal immigration arrests and support legislation in the 2027 legislative session to permanently close the gaps that allow this information to reach immigration authorities.

The organizations delivered a letter to the governor's office on October 21, following new research from the University of Washington Center for Human Rights documenting 356 immigration arrest incidents linked to federal agents' use of Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) data between August 2025 and October 13, 2026.

Despite Washington's 2019 Keep Washington Working Act, which restricts state cooperation with federal civil immigration enforcement, researchers found that federal immigration agents continue to access state-held driver and vehicle information through a national law enforcement data-sharing system.

"We cannot wait to protect Washington residents," said Guillermo Rivera of Eastside For All, a co-author of the letter. "We are asking the Governor's Office to take immediate action to review how this information is being collected and shared, identify any gaps or misuse, and use the authority available now to protect Washington residents."

The coalition is calling on Ferguson to suspend access to DOL information by agencies engaged in or supporting federal immigration enforcement, and to direct the Department of Licensing and Washington State Patrol to establish stronger safeguards, oversight, and accountability measures.

The UW report, *Stopping the DMV-to-DHS Data Pipeline*, identifies four potential routes through which immigration authorities can obtain state driver and vehicle information: direct database access, the national Nlets law enforcement network, commercial data brokers, and other government agencies.

Researchers found that personal information in the Washington DOL database remains accessible to agencies engaging in civil immigration enforcement through the Nlets data-sharing pathway even after state officials took steps to restrict their access. The report also raises concerns about other pathways that require further investigation.

For immigrant communities, the consequences extend far beyond concerns about data privacy.

"What we're seeing is not an abstract policy debate. It's families losing income, children losing parents, and entire communities living with fear and uncertainty," said David Morales of the Yakima Immigrant Response Network.

"People should be able to drive to work, school, medical appointments, or the grocery store without worrying that information they provided to a state agency could be used to facilitate an immigration arrest."

The organizations argue that Washington residents should be able to trust that information provided to state agencies will not be used in ways that undermine protections established under Washington law.

"Washington residents entrust the Department of Licensing with some of their most sensitive personal information, yet existing safeguards have repeatedly failed to prevent that information from being accessed and used for unlawful purposes, including racial profiling and enforcement of civil immigration laws by brutal means ", said Mark Bowers, an attorney with Columbia Legal Services representing Eastside For All.

The coalition is urging Governor Ferguson to take immediate action to prevent Washington's driver and vehicle records from being used for federal immigration enforcement, while supporting legislation that permanently closes existing loopholes and strengthens privacy protections for all Washington residents.

Read the coalition's letter:

http://eastsideforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/26-1009-Governor-Demand_E4A.pdf

Read the UW Center for Human Rights report:

<https://jsis.washington.edu/humanrights/2026/10/13/dmv-to-dhs-pipeline/>

About Eastside For All

Eastside For All is a racial equity advocacy organization working to advance racial, economic, and social justice in East King County through systemic changes in policies, practices, relationships, and investments.

About Columbia Legal Services

Columbia Legal Services is a statewide legal advocacy organization working alongside communities to advance racial and economic justice through impact litigation and policy advocacy. CLS focuses particularly on challenging the systems of mass incarceration and immigration enforcement that perpetuate inequality and injustice.