



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

MICHELLE WU

August 19, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

RE: Response to August 13, 2025 letter from Attorney General Bondi to Mayor Michelle Wu

Attorney General Bondi,

I write in response to your letter of August 13, 2025, threatening to prosecute local officials and illegally withhold federal grants and contracts unless the City of Boston agrees to actively participate in mass deportations.

This federal administration's false and continuous attacks on American cities and millions of our residents are unprecedented. You have eliminated health care and food assistance for our families; unlawfully cancelled grants for our schools and roads; slashed funding for our universities, hospitals, and research institutions; and deployed military personnel to occupy our streets. These attacks all come back to a common aim: the Trump Administration seeks to divide, isolate, and intimidate our cities, and make Americans fearful of one another.

The City of Boston is the safest major city in America. Our progress is the result of decades of community policing and partnership between local law enforcement and community leaders, who share a commitment to making Boston a safe and welcoming home for everyone. It is the result of our strong gun laws. And it is the result of our local policies—including the Boston Trust Act, which prohibits local police from engaging with federal immigration enforcement absent a criminal warrant, and which ensures that all Boston residents are able to report crimes and call 911 for help.

The City of Boston follows the law—local, state, and federal. The United States Constitution establishes that local governments, closest to the people, hold the authority to enact public safety policies without the threat of unlawful interference from the federal government. The Founding Fathers included these protections as a direct result of the attempted coercion of Boston by an unaccountable and distant monarch, and this city's refusal to bow down to tyranny. Two hundred and fifty years later, these hard-won freedoms are the legal backbone of our system of government. And these freedoms have nurtured the vibrant and diverse cities across every region of this country, which have fueled commerce and innovation to the benefit of all Americans.

Courts have consistently held, as recently as last month, that local public safety laws like the Boston Trust Act are valid exercises of local authority and fully consistent with federal law. *See, e.g., United States v. California, et al.*, 921 F.3d 865 (9th Cir. 2019); *United States v. State of Illinois, et al.*, No. 25-cv-1285 (N.D. Ill. July 25, 2025). Since the country's founding, the principle of state sovereignty, enshrined in the Tenth Amendment, has been fundamental to our republic. *See, e.g., Gregory v.*

Ashcroft, 501 U.S. 452, 457 (1991). It is indisputable that the drafters of the U.S. Constitution made “the decision to withhold from Congress the power to issue orders directly to the States.” *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*, 584 U.S. 453, 470 (2018). “[T]he Federal Government may not compel the States to enact or administer a federal regulatory program” nor “conscript state or local officers directly” nor “coerce States to action through improper influence.” *Illinois*, No. 25-cv-1285, slip op. at 19 (citing *New York v. United States*, 505 U.S. 144, 188 (1992); *Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898, 935 (1997); *Nat’l Fed’n of Indep. Bus. v. Sebelius*, 567 U.S. 519, 578 (2012)). As the federal court in Illinois wrote just weeks ago: “[A]nticommandeering is a bulwark against abuse of [federal] government power.” *Id.*

Additionally, in Massachusetts, state law places clear limits on participation in federal immigration enforcement. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, in *Lunn v. Commonwealth*, held that state and local law enforcement agencies may not arrest individuals solely based on immigration detainer requests from the federal government, absent a criminal warrant. 477 Mass. 517 (2017). The Boston Trust Act and its amendments codify the *Lunn* decision.

Our City’s longstanding and productive partnership with state and federal law enforcement to protect the people of Boston far predates your tenure. The Boston Police Department, the first municipal police department in the United States, works closely with state and federal agencies to address counterterrorism threats, protect our airport and our harbor, combat drug and human trafficking, and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes. Just last week, Boston Police arrested thirteen people as the result of a joint human trafficking investigation with the FBI and Massachusetts State Police. The week before, Boston Police worked alongside the FBI in an investigation that led to an arrest and the recovery of five firearms, including an assault rifle. Boston works every day with partners in the community and in law enforcement to keep our residents safe, and the City maintains full compliance with the law.

On behalf of the people of Boston, and in solidarity with the cities and communities targeted by this federal administration for our refusal to bow down to unconstitutional threats and unlawful coercion, we affirm our support for each other and for our democracy. Boston will never back down from being a beacon of freedom, and a home for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Wu".

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston