

Montgomery waves white flag on Secure Communities

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Montgomery County officials Tuesday acknowledged they are powerless to block a federal program that leads to more deportations of arrested illegal immigrants.

In previous days, County Executive Ike Leggett and council members were weighing legal challenges against the Secure Communities program, saying it would undermine public safety.

But a resolution passed by the council Tuesday said the county would comply with the program, expected to be implemented in September.

"The Montgomery County Council values the trust and confidence of all its residents and encourages our public safety officials to work closely with [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] to ensure that the Secure Communities Program is implemented consistently with its stated purpose and goals," the resolution said.

It was an about face for many council members, who previously said the program should not be allowed.

The previous resolution read, "the Council does not support the deportations of individuals who have not engaged in any criminal activity through the Secure Communities program, because it undermines community trust in the police."

The program requires local detention centers to send inmates' fingerprints to a national database that helps federal ICE agents identify and deport illegal immigrants.

Casa of Maryland, an immigration advocacy group held a press conference outside the council building in Rockville to praise the resolution. However, many in the crowd were unaware of the watered-down language when questioned by *The Washington Examiner*.

Still, Executive Director Gustavo Torres said he welcomed the message from Montgomery officials.

"It's part of the negotiation," he said. "Sure, I would have preferred the original [language]. We wanted a unanimous vote. I still think the message is clear that Secure Communities is not doing what it was intended to do."