

# Nassau Police chief reassures immigrants

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[Nassau County Police](#) Commissioner [Lawrence](#) Mulvey said immigrants who witness or are victims of crimes should have no fear of approaching police for help - regardless of their immigration status.

Mulvey appeared on a panel Wednesday at Touro Law Center in [Central Islip](#) titled Keeping Everyone Safe: Immigration and Law Enforcement on [Long Island](#), a two-hour forum that highlighted the relationship between undocumented immigrants and police and the negative impact that immigrants' fear of deportation has on law enforcement efforts.

"Many people do not know it's not illegal on the local level to be undocumented," Mulvey told the crowd of about 60 people, adding that immigrants' refusal to speak with police allows even serious crimes to go unsolved and unpunished.

He added that local law enforcement officers are not empowered to enforce immigration law, which is federal.

The event was sponsored by Long Island Wins and the Long Island Immigrant Alliance.

Mulvey joined Cardozo Law School professor Peter Markowitz, Heidi Beirich, director of research and special projects at the Southern Poverty Law Center, and Christopher Ortiz, staff associate of behavioral sciences at [New York Institute of Technology](#), who served as moderator.

"People won't come forward and get involved if they think local law enforcement is involved in immigration enforcement," said Markowitz, co-author of a report called "Constitution on ICE: A Report on Immigration Home Raid Operations." "It's about perception."

Beirich released a report earlier this year that found "pervasive fear and violence toward immigrants on Long Island" in her study of [Suffolk County](#), a document that centered on [Patchogue](#), where [Marcelo Lucero](#) was stabbed to death, allegedly by one of seven teenagers who had attacked him in November 2008.

That report is titled "Climate of Fear: Latino Immigrants in Suffolk County N.Y."

The panel discussion ended with a 12-minute video produced by the police department that Mulvey said will serve as an educational tool on curbing hate crimes for middle and high school children.

"Police are sworn to protect the safety of all aspects of society," Mulvey said.

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