

## **Hamilton County Democrats to Host ICE Press Conference in Cincinnati**

Representative Cecil Thomas

Good morning, everyone, and thank you for being here.

Today, as we observe Black History Month, we are reminded of the weight of our past—and the urgent responsibility we have to confront it. This month isn't just a time to reflect; it's a call to action. Because the truth is, history is not a relic. It is unfolding before our eyes.

George Floyd.

Alex Pretti.

Breonna Taylor.

Nicole Good.

These names are not just tragedies of the past. They are warnings—warnings that if we don't learn from history, we will continue to repeat it. And the horrifying truth is, these events are not as distant as they seem. Just six years ago, George Floyd's life was taken in the most brutal, unjust way imaginable. How quickly have we forgotten the anguish of that moment? How have we allowed ourselves to move on, as if a new name, a new villain, and a new victim somehow erase the impact of that violence?

I served as a police officer here in Cincinnati for 27 years. And in 2001, I was on the front lines during one of the darkest chapters in this city's history—a moment when Cincinnati's relationship with law enforcement was shattered by racial tensions, deep mistrust, and civil unrest, sparked by the fatal shooting of 19-year-old Timothy Thomas by a white officer.

I've seen how difficult it is to rebuild trust. I've seen how long it takes to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve. But I've also seen how quickly that trust can be destroyed. How swiftly people can lose faith in the very institutions meant to protect them. How fast fear can take root when there is no accountability. No transparency.

In 2020, I stood with millions across this nation, horrified by the murder of George Floyd. I watched, helpless, as fear turned into fury. I witnessed calls for justice and accountability twisted into accusations of "riots," "senseless violence." And now, here we are again, in 2026. Different names. Different officers. But the same appalling outcome.

Black History Month isn't just about reflecting on the past; it's about understanding that the fight for justice, equality, and humanity is far from over. This struggle is not just for one group—it's a fight for all of us. Because injustice in one corner of our society will inevitably bleed into the rest of it. It will erode the very fabric of our nation.

That's why I am honored to stand alongside Representative Brownlee in sponsoring the Community and Police Protection Act—a bill that seeks to restore accountability and transparency in law enforcement, and rebuild the trust that has been broken.

But we cannot turn a blind eye to the threat posed by several bills currently making their way through the Statehouse. These bills will tear us further apart. They will create fear, mistrust, and division—not just between communities and police, but between neighbors, families, and our very sense of shared humanity.

House Bill 281 would allow federal immigration agents to enter hospitals, arrest patients, conduct interviews, and gather evidence—without the safeguards necessary to protect people's

rights. And if hospitals don't comply, they could lose their funding—putting countless lives in jeopardy.

Senate Bill 172 would enable public officials to arrest or detain anyone suspected of being unlawfully present in the U.S., without any regard for legal protections. It would strip away our rights and allow arrests to take place under any circumstance, anywhere in Ohio—no warrant required.

These bills are not just a danger to immigrants. They are a danger to us all. They will tear at the very core of our communities, deepen the divides between us, and bring us back to a place of fear and distrust. We cannot let this happen.

Black History Month is a reminder that the fight for justice is ongoing. It's a reminder that when one group suffers, we all suffer. And it's a call for all of us to stand together, to demand accountability, and to ensure that we never forget the lessons of the past.

If we do not act—if we do not demand change—then we are complicit in the continuation of these injustices.

We have the power to make a difference. We have the power to stand up, to speak out, and to demand a future where justice, equality, and humanity are not privileges, but rights for all.

Thank you.