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IMMIGRANT PROTECTION PROJECT

Our Community Faces an Urgent Need

The Trump administration, through executive order, has exponentially expanded the immigrants who are prioritized for deportation. Despite the current court battles over some of the executive orders, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has ratcheted up its tactics, waiting outside courtrooms and making arrests in places they previously wouldn't. The elimination of privacy protections for non-citizens and other recent actions by the administration means that even Dream Act kids (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and legal permanent residents are afraid that their status is in jeopardy.

Immigrant and refugee families are rightly terrified and need access to the legal information, advocacy and remedies that will help keep them safe, prepare them for the dangers at hand and allay unnecessary panic.

Project Description

The Metropolitan Public Defender (MPD) is developing the Immigrant Protection Project to safeguard vulnerable immigrant families and their community. MPD has the experience and relationships to go into the community to help those who most need it. The project will have the following components:

- There will be at least 2 full-time immigration attorneys with appropriate support staff.
- The immigration attorneys will be working out of MPD with our existing immigration team which will allow access to criminal justice knowledge and resources as well as robust immigration legal support.
- The project will also leverage the existing work of MPD's Community Law Division, which handles more than 2000 cases a year clearing criminal records and other barriers.
- The immigration attorneys will work with and through culturally-specific groups and community organizations in Portland to individually meet the needs of the various immigrant communities. Possible options for community partnership might include holding weekly "office hours" in the community; doing trainings and staying for as long as is needed to talk with individuals about their cases and concerns; or taking referrals by phone from organizations that already have navigators in the community.
- The work in the community will be focused on upstream solutions. That means the immigration attorneys will help determine a person's legal situation, including immigration status, criminal record, and the confluence of the two. The attorneys would then help craft and implement whatever legal solutions are needed, including immigration work, record clearing, safety plans and protection from victimization.
- The project would also take direct referrals from non-profit immigration attorneys who have cases that need the additional expertise of an office with criminal law experience or state-level practice.

- MPD would be part of the larger group that is communicating real-time information to people in the community about what is happening with immigration enforcement. Such efforts might include presentations, legal support, or assisting with a website for the community. MPD will help where help is needed with its criminal justice expertise and connection to the courthouse.

Project Budget: It would cost \$250,000 to launch the Immigrant Protection Project. This budget would cover the cost of employing two attorneys to conduct outreach and represent clients. It would also cover some supervision and development by a managing attorney.

Background on MPD

Founded in 1971, the Metropolitan Public Defender (MPD) serves low-income Oregonians involved with criminal, civil, and juvenile court cases. MPD has an annual operating budget of approximately \$11.25 million. Our 125 attorneys and staff represent 14,000 clients a year, including many cases that involve immigration issues. The lawyers in MPD's Community Law Division, which assists 2,000 clients a year, serve clients by expunging past convictions, correcting erroneous records, reducing fines, and resolving immigration issues.

Conclusion

The Immigrant Protection Project presents an opportunity to help vulnerable immigrant communities in a way that is practical and immediate. This project could provide a national model for how local communities can pragmatically respond to the new administration's immigration policies. We would welcome the chance to work with you on this project.

For more information, please contact:

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