

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

MURPHY ADMINISTRATION DELIVERS ON PROMISE TO PROVIDE LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR IMMIGRANTS FACING DETENTION AND DEPORTATION

TRENTON – Following through on Governor Phil Murphy's budget initiative, the Department of the Treasury today announced that it has allocated \$2.1 million in supplemental funding to help provide legal representation for residents facing immigration issues.

"Families who came to New Jersey for a better life do not deserve to be torn apart by the federal government's cruel and discriminatory policies," **said Governor Murphy**. "Deportation is one of the harshest consequences an individual can face under U.S. law, yet most immigrants do not have the right to appointed counsel and many cannot afford an attorney. This funding will help provide critical legal representation to low-income residents who are detained and facing deportation in New Jersey and have no one to defend their rights."

Under the finalized grant agreement with the Treasury, legal representation will be administered through a consortium of providers. As the principal contractor, Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) will be allocated \$925,000 for direct representation services to eligible immigrants. An additional \$925,000 will be sub-granted to American Friends Service Committee for its direct representation services, and \$125,000 will be sub-granted to each of the law school clinics at Rutgers University and Seton Hall University for representation services.

"Providing access to counsel helps ensure due process and just treatment for immigrants while ensuring the efficient administration of our legal system, which can dramatically reduce the taxpayer costs associated with detention," **said State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio**. "When we invest in our families we promote economic and social stability, which benefits our communities and our economy as a whole."

According to the American Immigration Council, immigrant-led households in New Jersey paid an estimated \$6.5 billion in state and local taxes in 2014 and possessed \$54.6 billion in spending power. Undocumented immigrants in New Jersey comprised 7.9 percent of the state's workforce in 2014 and paid an estimated \$587.4 million in state and local taxes. It is estimated that their contribution would rise to \$661.1 million if they received legal status.

"Legal Services of New Jersey greatly appreciates the Governor's confidence in vesting us with the responsibility to serve as principal contractor and coordinate the overall project. We are committed to seeing that this new appropriation is utilized to maximum efficiency and effectiveness in benefitting those it is intended to assist," **said Melville D. Miller, Jr.**, President of Legal Services of New Jersey. "LSNJ has extensive experience in handling these cases. In just the couple of weeks since the grant was signed, we have been able to bring aboard a full complement of terrific new staff who will provide the representation. Affected immigrants who cannot afford to hire an attorney on their own will be financially eligible for representation, and those who seek assistance will receive a full assessment of their legal claims and specific advice concerning their legal rights. Those with meritorious claims and defenses will have the options of representation during the adjudicatory process."

"AFSC has been representing immigrant detainees for over 20 years in New Jersey and we have seen firsthand the significant impact that legal representation has on a detainee's ability to navigate a dehumanizing immigration system," **said Nicole Polley Miller, Esq.**, Legal Services Director, American Friends Service Committee. "A publicly funded legal representation program for immigrant detainees is critical to protect the due process rights of long-time New Jersey residents with deep ties to our communities and families who would be devastated by their detention and deportation, as well as immigrants who have fled persecution and violence in their home countries."

"If we truly believe in the ideals of due process and fairness as a nation, then we have to believe in universal legal representation for everyone facing detention and deportation," **said ACLU-NJ Executive Director Amol Sinha**. "The Statue of Liberty is as much a part of our state's identity as it is a part of our geography. It symbolizes the

guiding principles of compassion, dignity, and welcoming all who seek a better life. New Jersey's legal representation program will help us live up to those ideals by keeping families together, saving lives, and making our state a better, fairer, more economically sound place to live for all."

"As the federal government continues to rip apart families and detain immigrants and even U.S. citizens, our state is standing up to protect our families and make sure no one has to fight deportation alone. Up until now, most immigrants in New Jersey faced deportation and permanent separation from their families, without a lawyer by their side. Thanks to Governor Murphy's leadership, our state is one step closer to providing universal representation for detainees, and guaranteeing due process and fairness at a time when our communities need it most," **said Sara Cullinane**, Director, Make the Road New Jersey.

"Providing legal representation for immigrants is the best way to prevent family separations. While the right to an attorney is something we value as an important component of our justice system, detained immigrants are not provided legal counsel," **said Johanna Calle**, Director of the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice. "Most of those who have an attorney are able to win their case and have a better chance to adjust their status. We must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to seek justice. Distributing public funding to ensure a right to counsel is great first step to keeping New Jersey immigrant families together."

Advocates also noted that, in addition to the reasons rooted in constitutional principles, justice, and fairness, legal representation for detained immigrants facing deportation aids New Jersey financially. A program of representation reduces the high taxpayer costs associated with prolonged detention, and by streamlining the legal process, a representation program lessens the need for foster care and other programs that serve the U.S. citizen children whose parents are detained or deported. Legal representation would also lead to fewer families losing their sources of income and prevent more employers from shouldering the costs of turnover and hiring new employees after losing their workforce to deportation.

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Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

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