



PRESS STATEMENT:

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Immigrants and Community Leaders Celebrate the Hiring of Immigration Attorneys at the Office of the Cook County Public Defender's Office

(Chicago, IL) – The Immigration Unit pilot program at the Office of the Cook County Public Defender is one step closer to representing immigrants in their bond hearings and removal proceedings before the Chicago Immigration Court with the hiring of two additional immigration attorneys.

With this critical expansion, Cook County becomes the largest county in the nation to provide public defenders to serve the immigrant communities that are often under-represented in court proceedings.

Under the new program, Cook County will begin representing immigrants who cannot afford an attorney in their removal proceedings before the Chicago federal immigration court.

“During the last three years, 2,746 immigrants did not have legal representation in their removal proceedings at the Chicago immigration court” - *Imelda Salazar, Southwest Organizing Project*

Immigrants and community leaders are celebrating the hiring of two additional attorneys which will increase the number of immigrants that can be represented in these proceedings.

“Providing immigrants with legal representation significantly increases their chances of having a fair trial.” - *Fasika Alem, United African Organization*

Studies have shown that detaining immigrants while they fight their deportation affects immigrant families, communities, and the economy. Lack of legal representation and under representation can result in unjust convictions or extended detentions of immigrants, which result in lost wages.

A 2013 study from the University of California showed that a significant majority of the individuals who were detained were the principal economic provider for their family and as a result 64% of families reported having difficulty paying their rent, mortgage, household expenses, compared to 16% of families prior to the detention of principal economic provider. In our current economic situation, the economic impact of detaining immigrants goes beyond their immediate families. “Detention also affects the broader economy - most notably by employers who are left scrambling to find replacement workers, especially in industries that are already facing historic labor shortages.” - *Carole Segal, Co-Founder of Crate & Barrel and Co-Chair of the American Business Immigration Coalition*

The Defenders for All coalition celebrates this important step in securing legal representation for immigrants in Cook County and looks forward to the next few weeks when the Immigration Unit pilot program at the Office of the Cook County Public Defender will begin representing immigrants at the Chicago Immigration Court.



The [Defenders for All Coalition \(D4A\)](#) represents over 40 organizations that support the creation of a dedicated immigration unit within the Cook County Public Defender's Office. Learn more at [DefendersForAll.org](#). Follow D4A's work on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#):

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