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September 2, 2022

Honorable Mayor and City Council
Long Beach City Council
411 W. Ocean Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90802

Re: Long Beach Justice Fund – SUPPORT

Dear Mayor Garcia and members of the Long Beach City Council,

California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC) is pleased to continue our support for the Long Beach Justice Fund. We write to you in strong support of expanding the Long Beach Justice Fund and providing at least \$1 million for this fiscal year. The Long Beach Justice Fund provides legal representation, outreach, and education to low-income individuals residing or working in Long Beach and are facing detention and deportation.

CIPC was founded in response to the 1996 passage of federal immigration and welfare laws that profoundly affected immigrants. Today, we advance inclusive policies that build a prosperous future for all Californians, using policy analysis, advocacy, strategic communications, and capacity building. CIPC is deeply committed to upholding the principles of due process and equality under the law and challenging the criminalization of black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities in the arrest-to-deportation pipeline. Our organization has championed local and statewide efforts to disentangle police from the deportation system, helping to secure passage of the TRUST, TRUTH, and California Values Acts, and is committed to building upon and expanding these protections.

Immigrants and asylum seekers facing deportation do not have the legal right to a government-funded lawyer if they cannot afford a lawyer. Due to the extraordinary obstacles of securing legal representation, most of those who fight for their lives in immigration court—including 70 percent of people in detention¹—navigate the complexities of immigration law alone and sometimes without ever talking with a lawyer. The U.S. government has legal counsel in removal proceedings against individuals and families facing detention and deportation. Every individual facing removal proceedings deserves a government-funded lawyer if they cannot afford a lawyer in order to ensure fairness, dignity, and justice for all in our immigration system. CIPC strongly supports government-funded legal defense programs for immigrants, such as the Long Beach Justice Fund, to ensure low-income immigrants have access to free legal services and community services if an individual is subject to detention, deportation, and family separation.

Having legal assistance is the single most important factor that determines whether or not a person will succeed in their immigration case. The immigration system and immigration law are extremely confusing and complex and, without a lawyer, most people cannot put together the

¹ See Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), “State and County Details on Deportation Proceedings in Immigration Court,” <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta>.

evidence and arguments they need to prove their case. This is true both in the deportation context and in the context of applying for various kinds of visas and protections through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

As the Supreme Court has acknowledged², the consequences that stem from deportation are often more severe than those that follow a criminal conviction. Immigrants face permanent exile from the country they consider home and permanent separation from their loved ones if they lose their immigration case. Some immigrants may also face persecution, torture, or imminent danger in their countries of origin that the U.S. government is deporting them to. Dana Leigh Marks, Immigration Judge and President of the National Association of Immigration Judges, referred to some cases in removal proceedings as “death penalty cases heard in traffic court settings,” because of the speedy court process and the consequences at stake.³ Government-funded legal defense programs for any individual facing the life-threatening consequences of deportation aligns with the values of due process and justice for all.

The Long Beach Justice Fund has kept families together, saved lives, and provided critical outreach, education, and legal services to those facing life-threatening consequences of detention and deportation. There is widespread support for the investment of government-funded legal defense programs for immigrants. According to a national poll conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice, two in three people in the United States support government-funded lawyers for individuals facing deportation.⁴ Additionally, there is strong support from legal service providers, community-based organizations, faith leaders, community members, and the general public that people in the United States have a right to an attorney in court proceedings, including government-funded lawyers for immigrants facing deportation. Investments into programs such as the Long Beach Justice Fund provide a critical line of defense for individuals living and working in Long Beach who face permanent separation from their families and communities.

As a supporter of the Justice Fund since its inception, CIPC thanks the City of Long Beach for establishing and renewing the Long Beach Justice Fund to provide legal representation for low-income immigrants facing deportation. **We respectfully urge you to the continue the investment in the Long Beach Justice Fund in the amount of at least \$1 million and expand the services it provides.** If you have any questions, please contact me at bhuizar@caimmigrant.org or (213) 250-0880 ext. 110.

Sincerely,



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California Immigrant Policy Center
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² Padilla v. Kentucky, 559 U.S. 356, 368 (2010).

³ Dana Leigh Marks, “Immigration judge: Death penalty cases in a traffic court setting,” CNN Opinion, Jun. 26, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/26/opinion/immigration-judge-broken-system/index.html>.

⁴ Vera Institute of Justice, Taking the Pulse: Public Support for Government-Funded Attorneys in Immigration Court (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2020).