Oregon Immigrants’ Rights Organizations Decry ICE Subpoenas as “PR Stunt”

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CONTACT: Martina Bialek, Latino Network, martina@Latnet.org, m- 971-336-3453
Ivan Hernandez, Causa, ivan@causaoregon.org, m-541-561-3272
Ramon Valdez, Innovation Law Lab, ramon@innovationlawlab.org, m- 971-238-1804

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Oregon immigrants’ rights advocates, organizers, service providers, and attorneys in the Oregon Ready and One Oregon coalitions decried the latest attempt by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to subvert Oregon’s sanctuary law by issuing subpoenas to county sheriffs as a “PR stunt” designed to sow fear and chaos in the state. The groups are concerned that Oregon is being targeted for political reasons, and said that immigrant Oregonians are terrified that the extra attention from the Trump administration could lead to increased civil and human rights abuses in the state.

“In this past week, our community has been shaken to its core by ICE’s actions targeting, intimidating and trying to silence members of an already marginalized community,” said Ximena Ospina-Todd, community stability and support services director at Latino Network. “We have taken frantic calls from people who are afraid that this move by ICE will open the door for more racial profiling and family separations in Oregon. The use of administrative, non-judicial tactics such as the ones seen this week directly jeopardize the ability of community members to complete life-changing programs that will not only better their lives, but the lives of those around them. We refuse to allow our community to continue living with this crippling fear and anxiety—we will continue to uphold our values of self-determination and resilience despite these intimidating threats and constant attacks by ICE.”

Civil rights and immigration attorneys said the subpoenas raise significant concerns as they are self-issued by ICE and not reviewed by a judge.

“There are no safeguards for fairness or due process with these requests,” said Leland Baxter-Neal, staff attorney at the ACLU of Oregon. “There is no oversight on ICE. This seems like retaliation for our decades old state law and our values.”

The groups say that if local law enforcement are forced to comply with the ICE requests, it will divert local resources from Oregon communities and destroy trust.

“There are good reasons to be skeptical about the legality of ICE’s actions,” said Stephen Manning, executive director of Innovation Law Lab. “The last time they bullied counties with their
intimidation tactics, the counties were found liable for violating the law and ICE left them high and dry. Oregon officials should not be intimidated by this latest ICE publicity stunt.”

In 2018, Oregonians voted to defend the now 33-year old sanctuary law by a 27 point margin. The ballot measure was seen as a sharp rebuke by Oregon voters to President Trump’s immigration policies.

“Oregonians overwhelmingly voted to protect our 33-year-old sanctuary law,” said Adriana Miranda, executive director of Causa Oregon, which led the efforts to protect Oregon’s sanctuary law. “We must come together once more to ensure all Oregonians are treated fairly, regardless of the color of their skin, their accent, or their perceived immigration status. The administration’s deportation machine is not welcome here.”

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The Oregon Ready and One Oregon coalitions are comprised of hundreds of Oregon businesses, faith-based organizations, legal service providers, environmental groups, immigrant rights organizations, and other community-based organizations that work to protect and advance immigrants’ rights.

Causa is Oregon’s immigrant rights organization that works to improve the lives of Latino immigrants and their families.

Latino Network is a Latino-led education organization, grounded in culturally-specific practices and services, that lifts up youth and families to reach their full potential.

Innovation Law Lab is a Portland-based nonprofit that leverages advocacy, technology, and law to fight for immigrant and refugee justice.

The ACLU of Oregon is an affiliate of the national ACLU and has over 30,000 members statewide.