



November 17, 2020

NYIFUP Statement About Hudson County's Contract with ICE

The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) provides free, high-quality representation to detained people facing deportation in New York City. Our clients are New Yorkers who are detained in county jails that include the Hudson County Jail in New Jersey. NYIFUP is run by The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention is unjust and inhumane. It separates families, presents a public health crisis, diminishes the ability to fight against deportation, and reinforces a system that uses fear and abject cruelty as its principal tools. We are committed to realizing a world without ICE and without immigration detention. To make that vision a reality, the NYIFUP providers will continue to work alongside impacted people, their families, organizers, and other advocates.

The Hudson County Freeholders are currently considering whether to renew the county's contract with ICE to provide facility space and staff for immigration detention in the county jail. Two years ago, we opposed the termination of the contract between ICE and the Hudson County Jail out of concern that it would result in the mass transfer of people from the facility to other facilities across the country, far away from their families and to jurisdictions where they may not have access to counsel. Today, while transfers remain a concern, we also recognize that ending the contract with ICE may advance our goals of decarceration and freedom for the people we serve. We appreciate that we cannot predict how the termination of this contract would impact our current and future clients.

In light of this uncertainty, the NYIFUP providers have decided to take no position on whether Hudson County should end its contract with ICE. No matter what Hudson County decides to do, as public defenders we will remain steadfast and committed to our core mission of fighting for freedom in every case and ensuring that every detained immigrant forced to navigate the deportation machine has a zealous public defender by their side.

While Hudson County has the power to end its contract with ICE, it does not have the power to release those currently incarcerated by ICE. If the contract with ICE is terminated, the Freeholders can join us in advocating to ICE for our clients' release. If they are not released, the Freeholders can join us in advocating that they be transferred close to their families, that they be provided legal representation, and that they have time to prepare for their transfer. And if the county renews the ICE contract, we will continue to do the work we have always done: pursue every possible legal avenue to free people from ICE detention and ensure they remain with their families and communities.