



TESTIMONY OF:

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BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Presented before

The New York City Council Committees on Immigration and Hospitals

Oversight Hearing ICE’s Escalated Attacks on NYC Policies Protecting Immigrants

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My name is Nyasa Hickey. I am the Director of Immigration Initiatives at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). I am one of the BDS staff members responsible for reviewing our internal reports of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) enforcement actions in our communities as well as in and around courthouses, and I am also one of the people responsible for providing staff with guidelines about how to respond to ICE’s actions and how to counsel people we represent about their rights.

BDS provides multi-disciplinary and client-centered criminal, family, and immigration defense, as well as civil legal services, social work support and advocacy, for nearly 30,000 clients in Brooklyn every year. Since 2009, BDS has counseled, advised or represented more than 10,000 immigrant clients. I thank the City Council Committees on Immigration and Hospitals, and in particular Chair Menchaca, for the opportunity to testify about ICE’s escalated attacks on New York City’s policies to protect immigrant New Yorkers.

We are a provider of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) and a Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) recognized legal service provider. In addition, we represent individuals in applications for immigration relief, permanent residence, and naturalization before the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and in detained and non-detained

removal proceedings in federal immigration court. Our immigration specialists provide support and expertise on thousands of cases, including Padilla advisals, advocacy regarding enforcement of New York City's detainer law, as well as individualized immigration screenings and know-your-rights advisals.

I thank the City Council Committee on Immigration for the opportunity to testify about the proposed resolution and the attacks on New York City policies to protect immigrants.

Support for Existing Policies that Protect Immigrants' Rights and Resolution 274A

We applaud New York City and this City Council for its long-standing acknowledgement that immigrant New Yorkers are essential to the fabric of our community and that we must stand united to protect the rights and the integrity of all New Yorkers.

The New York City Council has led the nation with its efforts to protect and support immigrant communities. The first-in-the-nation public defender program for detained immigrants facing deportation, the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, has become a model for the provision of immigration legal services that is now being replicated in jurisdictions across the country.¹ In addition, the City invests millions of dollars every year for additional immigration legal services, English language lessons, citizenship outreach and education, and other programming that support the success of immigrant New Yorkers.

New York City was one of the first jurisdictions in the nation to pass a comprehensive detainer discretion law, which ensures that City police and jails are not unwittingly commandeered into making warrantless arrests in the service of a federal scheme of deportation that is rife with errors, abuses, and due process violations. Immigration detainers ask localities to hold people in jail beyond the time they would otherwise be released without a judicial warrant so that ICE can take custody of them and transfer them to immigration detention. Cities not only have to pay the bill for holding people in jail in violation of their Fourth Amendment rights, but are also legally responsible when they get sued for violating people's rights by holding them without a judicial warrant, transferring them to immigration detention centers that are notorious for horrific conditions and inadequate medical care, and facilitating their deportation when in fact they are United States Citizens. Moreover, blindly cooperating with immigration detainers would make the City complicit in a punitive deportation regime predicated on racial animus and hostile to the very concept of asylum, that by and large functions as a form of labor discipline for noncitizen working people who are scapegoated as "illegals" and "criminal aliens."

The Trump Administration has blamed "Sanctuary City" policies for its escalation in courthouse arrests, arguing that preventing ICE from apprehending people in city jails and police precincts leaves them no choice but to stalk people who appear before local and state courts. ICE has been quick to exploit any offense allegedly committed by an immigrant for propaganda purposes and to blame localities for refusing to deputize their local officials in furtherance of expediting and

¹ Learn more at Vera Institute of Justice, *SAFE Cities Network*, <https://www.vera.org/projects/safe-cities-network>.

facilitating the deportation pipeline. However, many of the local policies in question, like the City’s detainer law, had been in effect for several years even before the current Administration, and these policies only prevent City agencies from turning people over to ICE when there is no valid judicial warrant to verify the legitimacy of the arrest. The problem is not the City’s policies; the root of the problem is that ICE is an unrestrained agency that arrests immigrants without facing any significant check or measure of accountability on the self-proclaimed legitimacy of its self-issued administrative arrest warrants,² or its propensity for employing coercive and violent tactics that are used to arrest individuals. Unable to compel City police and jails into its service, ICE retaliates by taking advantage of a cornerstone of the integrity of the state criminal court process—the expectation that defendants released from custody will voluntarily return to court—to conduct disruptive plainclothes arrests that interrupt criminal proceedings by delaying both prosecution and exoneration. It is these practices that threaten the integrity of our State Courts and the safety of our communities, and there is simply no excuse for ICE’s widespread use of deceptive ruses, coercion, brandishing of weapons and resort to violent force.

Accordingly, we are also in support of the City Council to pass Resolution 274A - calling on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Combating Deceptive Immigration Enforcement Practices Act of 2019 (H.R. 3498), which would prohibit agents of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from wearing clothing or equipment that bears the word “police,” and calling upon the Department of Homeland Security to prohibit ICE agents from identifying themselves as police officers while conducting immigration enforcement activities in New York City.

Notably, we have also outlined additional steps that this City Council can take protect our immigrant New Yorkers and New York communities in the section titled “Recommendations and Additional Actions.”

Increased ICE Enforcement and Harmful Operations Tactics in New York

In the past month and a half since the beginning of 2020, we have seen a dramatic increase in ICE operations in New York City, including more than ten arrests of people already represented by BDS at the time of arrest in criminal or family court proceedings. ICE has increasingly been using militarized rhetoric and tactics such as a declaring that they will deploy special forces known as BORTAC, which are enhanced tactical law enforcement units that typically have stun

² See Bob Ortega, *ICE supervisors sometimes skip required review of detention warrants, emails show*, CNN, March 13, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/13/us/ice-supervisors-dont-always-review-deportation-warrants-invs/index.html> (“Internal emails and other ICE documents . . . obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request . . . show that other officers across [a] five-state region . . . had improperly signed warrants on behalf of their supervisors – especially on evening or weekends. Some supervisors even gave their officers pre-signed blank warrants – in effect, illegally handing them the authority to begin the deportation process.”).

grenades sniper certifications.³ The impact of the increased and militarized enforcement policies at the federal level are felt by our immigrant clients, their families and New York City communities. We have written about many of these practices at length in previous testimony⁴ and list many of ICE's most pernicious practices here:

- Arrests
 - Increased home and workplace raids in the community including ICE arrests in homeless shelters⁵
 - Increased ICE arrests in and around city courthouses, limiting access to the court system⁶
 - Increased arrests of people who are not the targets of the arrest, also known as “collateral arrests,” which also seems to correlate with the use of mobile fingerprint devices and demands by ICE that everyone in the proximity submit their fingerprints
 - Increased use of aggressive arrest practices and use of force including brandishing guns and making threats
 - Reliance on ruses and other nefarious means to lure targets into ICE custody including using police precincts as locations for ruses⁷
 - Effectuating arrests or entering private homes without judicial warrants⁸
 - Racial profiling, including relying on unsubstantiated gang allegations⁹
 - Detaining people at Order of Supervision (OSUP) check-ins¹⁰
 - Re-arresting people who have won relief in immigration court but have not yet received their visas or green cards¹¹

³ Caitlin Dickerson and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, *Border Patrol Will Deploy Elite Tactical Agents to Sanctuary Cities*, The New York Times, Feb 14, 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/Border-Patrol-ICE-Sanctuary-Cities.html>

⁴ Please see our previous testimonies before the City Council, available on the Brooklyn Defender Services website at www.bds.org/#policy.

⁵ IMMIGRANT DEFENSE PROJECT, ICEWATCH: ICE RAIDS TACTICS MAP (2018), available at <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/ICEwatch-Trends-Report.pdf>.

⁶ See, e.g., Press Release, Immigrant Defense Project, IDP Unveils New Statistics & Trends Detailing Statewide ICE Courthouse Arrests in 2017, available at <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/ICE-Courthouse-Arrests-Stats-Trends-2017-Press-Release-FINAL.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Kavitha Surana, *How Racial Profiling Foes Unchecked in Immigration Enforcement*, PROPUBLICA, June 8, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/racial-profiling-ice-immigration-enforcement-pennsylvania>.

¹⁰ *Testimony of Andrea Saenz, Presented before the New York City Council Committee on Immigration Oversight Hearing on the Impact of New Immigration Enforcement Tactics on Access to Justice and Services*, March 15, 2017.

¹¹ *Id.*

- Court Appearances
 - Abolishing nearly all in-person appearances at Varick Street Courthouse, leaving the only option for detained people to appear in court to do so via Video Teleconferencing (VTC)¹²
 - Failing to produce detained people for state court proceedings where writs are issued by the courts or prosecutors to ensure their appearance
- Detention
 - Sub-standard detention conditions for detained immigrants
 - Insufficient access to medical care and mental health treatment¹³
 - Insufficient or spoiled food¹⁴
 - Damaged and insufficient clothing and hygiene products¹⁵
 - Overly restrictive and inappropriate use of administrative segregation¹⁶
 - Lack of access to programming and other supports
 - Lack of language services to facilitate communication with non-English-speaking detained people

I. ICE uses coercion and intimidation to gain entry people's homes:

Example: In the early morning hours just a few days before Christmas, when it was still dark outside, ICE officers banged on a family's door and misleadingly announced themselves as "police." The ICE officers repeatedly shouted that they had a warrant and therefore should be let into the home, although they refused to show the warrant and in fact did not have a judicial warrant allowing them entry into the home, but merely an administrative warrant. When a family member opened the door to the home, the ICE officers still did not accurately identify themselves, and proceeded to accuse a family member of "harboring" a "criminal" in front of her young children. At this point the family member "consented" (read: was coerced) to allow ICE to enter the home. ICE arrested James¹⁷ in such an aggressive and intimidating matter that the family member and the young children in the home were crying and shaking.

¹² *Testimony of Nyasa Hickey, Presented before the New York City Council Oversight Hearing on the Impacts of the Trump Administration Family Separation Policy on New York, July 12, 2018.*

¹³ NEW YORK LAWYERS FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST, *DETAINED AND DENIED: HEALTHCARE ACCESS IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION* (2017), available at http://www.nylpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/HJ-Health-in-Immigration-Detention-Report_2017.pdf.

¹⁴ HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST, *AILING JUSTICE: NEW JERSEY, INADEQUATE HEALTHCARE, INDIFFERENCE, AND INDEFINITE CONFINEMENT IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION* (2018), available at <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/Ailing-Justice-NJ.pdf>.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC., *CONCERNS ABOUT ICE DETAINEE TREATMENT AND CARE AT FOUR DETENTION FACILITIES* (June 2019).

¹⁷ The names of the persons we represent have been changed.

Example: ICE raided a home by pounding on the door before 7:00 a.m. The officers shouted that they were “police” and had the words “police” on the front of their jackets. Jeffrey opened the door and ICE agents forced their way in, announcing themselves as “police” and were doing some sort of a verification. Once inside the home, the ICE agents dragged the targeted person outside to the ICE vehicle in only pajama bottoms, without any essential clothing such as socks, shoes, or shirt, at which point they handcuffed him.

II. ICE uses unnecessary lethal weapons to intimidate and arrest people in public places

Example: Laurence when leaving court after his court appearance, he was approached by ICE officers while waiting for a bus. The ICE agents pushed a gun into Laurence’s side and said, "don't move, ICE" and held the gun there for about 10 seconds until three more agents arrived in a van. The agents then pushed Laurence into the van, searched him, and arrested him.

Example: Jack was leaving an appointment with his personal injury lawyer and was walking to his parked car. When he got inside his car was he approached by someone on foot who identified himself as an ICE agent and a car pulled up next to him, blocking his car from moving. Then, several ICE agents got out and told him to get out of his vehicle, after which they pointed a gun to his back and arrested him.

Example: Charlie was on his way from his house to go to his court appearance when ICE agents stopped him by pointed a gun at him and telling him to get on his knees. The ICE agents then threw him to the ground arrested him.

III. ICE’s uses of deceptive ruses and intentional misrepresentation of themselves as “police”

ICE officers routinely pose as police officers, purposefully misdealing or failing to distinguish themselves from NYPD or other law enforcement agencies, and even goes so far as to claim to be “police” working with the local District Attorney:

Example: Lennard received a number of phone calls on his cell phone from a number he didn’t recognize. After of a couple of unanswered calls, Lennard eventually answered the phone. ICE agents, who told Lennard that they were from the Brooklyn District Attorney’s office, told Lennard that he needed to come into the office to speak about an open case. The ICE agents offered to meet Lennard in uptown Manhattan, where he was staying at a friend’s apartment. Lennard, believing that the agents worked for the District Attorney’s office, agreed to meet them at 10:00 a.m. The ICE agents suggested that they meet Lennard on nearby street corner, and he agreed although he thought it was a peculiar meeting place. At 10:00 a.m. on the agreed-upon date, Lennard showed up and no one was there. He called the agent that he had been in touch with and the ICE agent said he was running late but on his way. Shortly afterwards, three cars pulled up and

arrested Lennard. It was only then that Lennard learned that the agents were ICE and not actually affiliated with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.¹⁸

ICE unabashedly touts the use of ruses as a legitimate ICE tactic. John Torres, Acting Director of ICE in 2005, wrote the following in an agency memo on the use of ruses:

The USMS [U.S. Marshals Service], FBI and various other federal, state and local agencies have successfully used 'ruses' to lure targets to locations where the arrests were made with the least amount of danger to both the officers and targets. The use of a ruse during an arrest means that we control the time and location, not the target.[...] Ruses can run the gamut from announcing that you are with DRO [ICE Detention and Removal Operations] and looking for a person other than the target to adopting the guise of another agency (federal, state or local) or that of a private entity.¹⁹

IV. ICE has hijacked our courts for its enforcement purposes

ICE's focus on targeting State and City courts as a place to stalk and arrest immigrants has created additional obligations for our attorneys appearing in court who now must regularly be physically present with people that they represent outside of the courthouses in an attempt to help them invoke their rights in the event that ICE seeks to arrest and detain them. Notably, ICE routinely fails to take notice of counsel's presence or invocation of a person's rights, and instead seizes identification without consent, takes statements without counsel present, and fails to notify counsel of a person's location in detention. This is especially problematic when BDS staff attempt to tell ICE officers that a client has special needs—such as life-threatening medical conditions that require medication, or responsibility as the sole caretaker for a minor child—but are ignored.

ICE has arrested our clients in parking lots, sidewalks and other areas outside of courts in the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Community Justice Courts, as well as in and around courts in Long Island, Westchester and Upstate New York. When making courthouse arrests, ICE is almost always dressed plainclothes, and generally refuses to identify themselves or give information about where the person they are arresting is being taken. To effectuate the arrest, ICE uses coercive and intimidating arrest tactics such as brandishing weapons and allegedly saying things like: "You either come with us now, or we follow you home and take your whole family."

The criminal history of the people targeted in and around the courthouses has ranged from people who are only accused of a crime and have no criminal history, to minimal DUI infractions to more serious and lengthy criminal histories. Regardless of the gravity of the criminal

¹⁸ Ryan Devereaux, *ICE has conducted hundreds of raids in New York since Trump came to Power. Here's what those operations look like*, THE INTERCEPT, July 23, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/07/23/ice-raids-in-new-york/>.

¹⁹ John P. Torres, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Addition to Section 5, Chapter 19 (Field Operations and Tactics) of the Detention and Deportation Officer's Field Manual (DDFM) – Use of Ruses During Arrest Operations (Aug. 15, 2015).

allegations, in the case of the courthouse arrests these noncitizen clients are voluntarily returning to court. In some cases the person we represent was arrested after the case was called, but while there was still an open case (*i.e.*, the case was adjourned to a future date); in other cases the client was arrested before he could appear before the criminal court. As a consequence of intervening ICE arrests, people are regularly denied the opportunity to speak with defense counsel, the chance to understand what's happening in their case, or the right to appear in court. These denials lead to severe consequences in many cases, even a criminal court warrant being issued for a person's arrest who failed to appear in criminal court because he was detained in ICE custody.

Most recently, we have noticed that ICE arrests have happened in the community just days after someone was arraigned in criminal court. As a result, a criminal case for minor charges remains open and unresolved, both prejudicing the person we represent in their immigration proceedings where a pending criminal charge is linked with a presumption of guilt, and in their criminal proceedings where the person's absence may result in the issuance of a warrant or, at the very least, an open case hanging over their head.

The ICE arrests and the detention and deportation of immigrants with open criminal charges disrupts the criminal legal process and interferes with people's due process rights by preventing them from appearing before the criminal courts. The issuance of a criminal warrant because someone is detained in immigration jail not only stymies the entire judicial system and an individual's access to due process to challenge the charges against them, but can lead to denial of immigration relief and effective lifetime banishment in the form of deportation.

Example: NYPD recently refused to certify a U-visa for the victim of a serious crime, who is represented by BDS, because the person has an outstanding warrant for failure to complete the last of a series of give classes related to driving without a license. The person was unable to complete the classes and appear in court because that individual was detained in ICE custody and as a result a warrant was issued. This individual was detained in immigration for more than 125 days without a court hearing at Varick Street Immigration Court, meanwhile they were unable to complete the TASC class nor appear in court and as a result a warrant was issued on the criminal case. As a secondary result, because of the warrant, now that person is ineligible for a U-visa as a victim of a crime because of NYPD's refusal to certify.

Notably, other actors in the immigration deportation system also frequently violate our clients' rights, and our concerns about their actions are listed in previous testimony before this committee. However, the combined effect of these injustices are that our clients are increasingly likely to be targeted for enforcement or swept up in mass raids, held for months of years without bond in horrible detention conditions. All of this occurs on top of harsh and unfair immigration laws like IIRIRA and racially biased policing that disproportionately punishes low-income people of color.

The Trump administration is facilitating family and community separation by funneling people into the immigration deportation system in the name of "safety" and "criminal justice." Instead, public proclamations of increased raids in New York and use malicious ICE arrest strategies forces immigrant communities to turn away from reporting crimes, cooperating in investigations,

and from seeking help. This destabilizes all of our communities, creates additional mistrust of the local police, and makes us all less safe.

Brooklyn Defender Services is Responding

As a direct services provider, Brooklyn Defender Services is a first-responder to ICE's attacks on the immigrant clients and immigrant communities we serve. We regularly provide know-your-rights trainings for the community, including information on encounters with ICE and family preparedness planning. For example, at our Community Office we developed a training for people who work in homeless shelters to understand the rights of immigrant shelter residents and interactions with ICE in shelters. We also produced four short animated films as part of a national empowerment campaign called "We Have Rights" or "Tenemos Derechos" that informs community members how to prepare for and safely defend their rights during encounters with ICE.²⁰ We are currently developing new video segments for the "We Have Rights" campaign in response to the increased enforcement and militarization against the immigrant community.

As enforcement has continued to ramp up since 2017 and enforcement practices have changed, we continuously had to pivot to modify our advice to inform the people we represent and the Brooklyn community about current ICE practices. Our Immigration Practice provides individualized screening and know-your-rights advice to immigrant BDS clients in all of our practice areas including the Criminal Defense Practice and Family Defense Practice. If we learn that a person we represent has been detained by ICE, we have an internal triage process through which we screen and provide support, which sometimes includes outside referrals. In most cases our NYIFUP team is immediately brought on board and provides the people we represent with top-notch representation. Internally, we also collect written reports of ICE courthouse or community arrests in order to monitor current trends and be as prepared as possible to answer questions from the people we represent.

Recommendations and Additional Actions

This City Council can continue its support of New York immigrant communities and take concrete steps to minimize the detrimental impact of ICE enforcement actions through the following recommendations:

1. Support robust funding for immigration legal services like NYIFUP which are critical to keeping families together.
2. End Broken Window Policing a policy that, in criminalizing even the smallest of offenses, puts thousands of immigrants in danger just by virtue of having been fingerprinted. Mere arrests, even in cases that are later dismissed or resolved with a non-criminal violation, can lead to deportations, broken families and broken communities.

²⁰ Learn more about the campaign at www.wehaverights.us

Change NYPD's policy to fingerprint anyone who is arrested, even if only for a low-level offense like fare evasion. Some police armed with tablets are even fingerprinting people in their neighborhoods, without even making an arrest that leads to a trip to the precinct and processing at Central Booking. Fingerprints collected by the NYPD are transmitted to the FBI, who in turn can share them with the Department of Homeland Security, potentially leading to an arrest by ICE and deportation. Even if a district attorney declines to press charges, an immigrant is put at heightened immediate risk of being found by ICE.

Broken windows policing, or the criminalization of the most minor offenses, even without a resulting conviction, thus directly sends thousands of immigrants and their fingerprints to the federal government every year. Over the past three years, the BDS immigration practice has represented dozens of detained clients in deportation proceedings for underlying "crimes" like possession of small amounts of marijuana, turnstile jumping, and driving without a license. Some of these clients are legal permanent residents who had been living in the U.S. for dozens of years with these minor convictions on their record before they were swept up by ICE.

3. Provide support to city agencies, hospitals and communities to develop policies and training for staff on know-your-rights information specific to the immigrant population that they serve. For example, provide funding and resources to support for homeless shelters to develop protocol to protect the rights of immigrants when ICE targets a homeless person in a New York City shelter for arrest and deportation.
4. Support the State legislative efforts to change systems and practices that harm immigrants, such as:²¹
 - NY for All (S7562/A9586) to restrict municipal or state agencies from inquiring about a person's immigration status or nationality, from sharing information with ICE or Customs and Border Enforcement (CBP) except as required by federal law, from entering into agreements to deputize officers to work on behalf of ICE, and from enforcing civil immigration law themselves.
 - Protect Our Courts Act (A2176A/S425A), which would prohibit the warrantless ICE arrests of immigrants in or on their way to the courthouse and ensure that they can access their due process rights without fear and intimidation by ICE.²²
 - Repeal the "Walking While Trans" ban (A00654/S02253) which would repeal Penal Law 240.37, Loitering for the Purpose of Engaging in Prostitution which

²¹ Information about many of these legislative efforts available through the Justice Roadmap: <https://www.justiceroadmapny.org/>

²² Information about the New York State bill, Protect Our Courts Act: <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/ice-courts-nys/>

has a disparate impact on women of color and LGBTQ communities and results in the detention and deportation of immigrants.²³

- Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (S1527B/A1617B) which ends marijuana prohibition, expunges marijuana offenses, removes a positive marijuana test as a basis for parole or probation violations, or for denying access to employment or licensing, and drastically reduces the number of people at risk of deportation due to marijuana offenses. There is a growing recognition among policymakers of all parties, many of whom may struggle with addiction themselves or have friends or family members who struggle with addiction, that criminalization is an ineffective and, in fact, often very dangerous approach to drugs. The sharp racial disparities in these arrests—approximately nine-in-ten of those arrested are Black and/or Latinx—are inexcusable and are a pipeline to the detention and deportation of immigrants.
5. Urge Governor Cuomo to exercise his pardon power to protect immigrants from deportation.²⁴ The City could also fund community organizations or partner with pro bono law firms to file pardon applications and do pardon advocacy.
 6. Build community trust between the City and the immigrant community to ensure that community members feel comfortable reaching out to NYPD to verify whether or not an “investigation” or a request to surrender on a warrant is valid, or whether it is an ICE ruse. Building community trust also requires reforming many of the policing strategies this City has trumpeted for years, including ending quality of life crime policing as outlined above and instead focusing on building public safety through community support and developing close ties and trust with the communities that the police are meant to serve.

Conclusion

We urge New York City to remain steadfast in the protection of immigrants New Yorkers, and not to fall prey to false rhetoric blaming “Sanctuary City” policies. We hope this Council will commit to advocating for city, state and federal reform that will change systems and practices that harm impacted immigrant communities. We also urge the Council to continue to support funding for legal services as we are know that impact of access to legal representation is central to an individual’s ability to challenge their deportation proceedings, as well monitor and hold the government accountable for detrimental policies and practices and challenge violations of people’s rights. As New Yorkers, we know that policies that protect our immigrant communities protects our community as a whole. Thank you for inviting us to testify and for considering our testimony today.

²³ <https://www.nycbar.org/member-and-career-services/committees/reports-listing/reports/detail/peal-the-walking-while-trans-ban>

²⁴ <https://immigrantpardonproject.com/>