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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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**Immigrant and Refugee Families, Faith Leaders, Victims and Civil Rights Advocates and Business Leaders Urge Albuquerque City Council to Reaffirm Albuquerque as Immigrant Friendly City**

Albuquerque— In the wake of memos issued yesterday by the Trump administration that create a blueprint for mass deportation in addition to an uptick of ICE activity targeting Albuquerque’s immigrant communities in past weeks, over 40 immigrant and refugee-based organizations, faith-based institutions, victims and civil rights advocates, and business leaders and approximately 375 community members turned out to urged the Albuquerque City Council to vote in favor of Albuquerque reaffirming it’s status once again as an Immigrant Friendly City and to commit to strengthening City policies in light of new threats in a Trump-era. The memorial passed on a 6:1 vote with Councilors Peña, Benton, Sanchez, Davis, Gibson (Democrats), and Winter (Republican) voting in favor and Councilor Jones voting against.

The memorial reiterates a commitment to uphold the rights of all residents of Albuquerque, to offer City services, regardless of immigration status, and that “in accordance wit City policy, established in R-00-15 and APD standard operating procedures that City employees, including members of the Albuquerque Police Department, shall not enforce federal immigration laws and shall not use monies, resource or personnel to investigate, questions, detect or apprehend persons whose only violation may be a violation of immigration law.”

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Rachel LaZar, the Executive Director of El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos stressed, “Trump’s Draconian executive orders aim to turn away refugees who have fled violence and persecution, to ban people from Muslim majority nations, and to conduct immigration raids in our communities that target some, sweep up many, and terrorize all. We laud the sponsors of the memorial for taking actions that commit to returning Albuquerque to the status of an Immigrant Friendly City. This in line with our proud legacy of passing policies which are conducive to integrating immigrants into the mainstream that proceeded and were undermined by the Berry administration.”

LaZar continued, “At a time when our families are being targeted and torn apart by ICE activity in Albuquerque and when fear is at an all-time high, the fact that Mayor Berry was quoted stating that these DHS memos won’t impact Albuquerque and continues to stand behind his dangerous Trump-like practice of “welcoming Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to check immigration status of suspects” is disturbing and shows how out of touch the Mayor is with Albuquerque’s immigrant communities. These practices foment racial profiling, undermine community policing, have a chilling impact on public safety, gut the presumption of innocence enshrined in our Constitution, and have lead to the senseless deportation of countless Albuquerque families in the past. We will fight back to ensure that our City does not go in that direction again. This memorial is a step in the right direction.”

Andrea Plaza, Executive Director of Encuentro, stressed the importance of creating a business environment that is conducive to growing Albuquerque’s local economy, “Supporting this memorial now and continuing to respond and act against every detrimental action from this presidential administration is essential to the continued prosperity of our city. The business community recognize the important contributions immigrant businesses make to our overall economic landscape. Immigrant-owned businesses have created jobs, generated millions of dollars in local tax revenue and have revitalized many of our cities business corridors.”

Faith leaders urged City Council members to vote in favor of the memorial and commit to expanding and strengthening current policies, “The level of fear provoked by uncertainty related to immigration issues is palpable across our social institutions. Where once there was an assumption of freedom to participate, now there is fear. This is not what we want for our community. We must find ways to insure peace and security without disrupting the social institutions that strengthen our community,” stated Reverend Kay Huggins, the interim Director of the New Mexico Conference of Churches.

Peter Simonson, executive director of the ACLU-NM, reminded the Council that provisions of sanctuary policies lie in line, not in defiance of the US federal system, “Local jurisdictions have no legal obligation to assist with the civil immigration enforcement, which is the sole responsibility of the federal government. We will challenge the constitutionality of Trump’s attempt to coerce and bully municipalities into assisting in the enforcement of federal immigration laws.” Simonson continued, “At this critical time when the president has declared open season on immigrants, it is imperative that the City of Albuquerque affirm its commitment to support immigrant families in our city and not contribute to the misery and injustice that our federal agencies are planning to deliver around the nation.”

City Councilor Isaac Benton explained why he co-sponsored the memorial, “Our city is historically diverse. We welcome and encourage immigrants to live, work, and study in Albuquerque because they contribute to our culture and economy.”

Marian Méndez Cera, community organizer and a DACAmented youth leader with EI CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos stressed the profound integration of immigrant communities into the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Albuquerque, “We are proud New Mexicans. We are Albuquerque’s mothers, taxpayers, classmates, the workers who clean your homes, who take care of your parents and children, who build New Mexico’s homes and office buildings and work in the service industries. We are all New Mexico and our communities are here to stay.”

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\*EI CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos is a grassroots, immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization based in Albuquerque, NM that works with Latino immigrant communities and allies to defend, strengthen, and advance the rights of our community.