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PRESS RELEASE

City Council Vote- Immigrant Friendly Memorial

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Immigrant Families, Faith Leaders, Victims and Civil Rights Advocates and Business Leaders Urge County Commission to Reaffirm Bernalillo County as an Immigrant Friendly County

Albuquerque— In the wake of executive orders issued 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, immigrant and refugee families, faith leaders, victims and civil rights advocates and business leaders urged the Bernalillo County Commission to vote in favor of a resolution reaffirming it’s status as an Immigrant Friendly County. The resolution was passed on a bi-partisan vote with Commissioners Hart-Stebbins, O’Malley, Quezada, and Talbert voting in favor and Commissioner Johnson being the sole vote against.

Amongst other provisions, the resolution reaffirms the County’s commitment to upholding the civil rights of all residents in Bernalillo County, regardless of their immigration status, and to not enforcing federal civil immigration laws (something which is under the sole purview of the federal government). Supporters also urged commissioners to uphold a provision in the resolution that directs County Staff to “identify and recommend policies or proposals that would serve to supplement and enhance the County’s immigrant friendly status”

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 efforts of the Bernalillo County Commission for taking actions that commit to Bernalillo County to being an immigrant friendly county. This in line with our proud legacy in New Mexico of passing policies which are conducive to integrating immigrants into the mainstream.

Andrea Plaza, Executive Director of Encuentro, stressed the importance of creating a business environment that is conducive to growing Albuquerque and Bernalillo County’s local economy, “Supporting this resolution now and continuing to respond and act against every detrimental action from this presidential administration is essential to the continued prosperity of our local communities and economies. 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 County Commission members to vote in favor of the resolution 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 Commission 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.”

Marian Méndez Cera, community organizer and a DACAmented youth leader with El 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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