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For Immediate Release

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**Immigrant Communities Hold Mayoral Candidates Accountable:
Real Leaders Do not Hide**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM- *The following is a statement from Marian J. Mendez-Cera, community organizer from El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos regarding the 2017 #RealTalk Mayoral Candidates Forum.*

“Trump’s executive orders aim to turn away refugees who have fled violence and persecution, grow the for-profit private prison industry on the backs of hard-working immigrants families, ban people from Muslim majority nations, attempt to expand Draconian enforcement programs that use local criminal justice systems, trample on our due process and constitutional rights and conduct raids in our communities that target some, sweep up many, and terrorize all. In the wake of these executive orders, real leaders cannot hide-- they must rise up to defend our communities.

El CENTRO is attending the #RealTalk Mayoral Candidates’ Forum to urge all candidates not to repeat the mistakes of the current administration. Immigrants, low-wage workers, refugees and allies in Albuquerque will not stand by idly and allow a future mayor to force us back into the shadows. Mayor Berry continues to stand behind his dangerous Trump-like practice of “welcoming Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to check on the immigration status of suspects” at the Prisoner Transport Center. In 2009, when Mayor Berry attempted to make good on his anti-immigrant campaign promise to end sanctuary in Albuquerque, he expanded federal deportation programs such as Secure Communities-- the same program that Trump is now trying to coerce municipal governments into implementing. This program was dismantled by the Obama administration in 2014 because the program, along with other federal deportation programs, was found to foment racial profiling and pretextual arrests, undermine community policing, have a chilling impact on public safety, gut the presumption of innocence enshrined in our Constitution, and led to the deportation of countless Albuquerque families.

These policies do not reflect our collective values and our leaders cannot be complicit in the targeting and deportation of hardworking immigrant families and workers. We urge all candidates to commit to not entering into another agreement with ICE to implement federal deportation programs, to strengthen current sanctuary city provisions, to support economic policies that benefit all low-wage workers and their families such as paid-sick-leave and defense of Albuquerque minimum wage, and to commit to passing policies which integrate immigrants into the mainstream.

We also urge candidates to support immigrant friendly policies, such as sanctuary cities, that recognize the importance of immigrants' many contributions to the social, cultural, intellectual and economic fabric of our city. Immigrant friendly policies make Albuquerque a safer place for all citizens. Statistically, through these policies victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence are more likely to seek assistance; key witnesses of crime are more prone to come forward, and neighborhoods become safer and healthier. [1]

Moreover, immigrant friendly policies recognize that immigrants are our neighbors, co-workers, classmates, small-business owners down the block, tax-payers, and our family members. Immigrant workers take care of our elderly and children, build and roof our adobe homes, pick the chile that we are so proud of, work in the dairies and oil fields, and work in the service industry. We are all Albuquerque. We are all New Mexico. Real leaders don't hide—they stand up, step forward, and lead.”

– El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos

[1] Searching Out Sanctuary, An Analysis of America's Counties and Their Voluntary Assistance with Deportation; Immigrant Legal Resource Center.

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**El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos is a grassroots, immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization based in Albuquerque with over 4000 members.*