



PRESS RELEASE

August 12nd, 2017

For Immediate Release

Contact: Maria Jose Ramos (505) 916-182, [mramos\\_elcentro@gmail.com](mailto:mramos_elcentro@gmail.com)

**Immigrant, Faith, Civil Rights, and Victim Advocacy Organizations Defeat Commissioner Johnson's  
Anti-Immigrant Resolution  
Another Victory for Our Hard Working Immigrant Families**

BERNALILLO COUNTY, NM--EI CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos lauded the decision of the Bernalillo County Commission to reject an anti-immigrant resolution tonight introduced by Commissioner Johnson.

Hundreds of immigrant families from EI CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos and other immigrant-based organizations spoke out against a proposed county resolution that would have compelled county-operated detention facilities, including the Metropolitan Detention Center, to cooperate in the enforcement of federal immigration law. The resolution overwhelmingly failed on a 4:1 bi-partisan vote, with only Commissioner Johnson voting in favor of his own resolution. The proposal would have rescinded the county's official status as an "immigrant friendly county" and capitulate to Trump and U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions' recent demand that county-operated detention facilities aid in the the enforcement of federal immigration law, a scheme both unconstitutional and dangerous to public safety.

The resolution designating Bernalillo County as "immigrant friendly" was passed on March 14th 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 (in line with federal law).

Rachel LaZar, Executive Director of EI CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos, reminded the Commission that "Albuquerque has a proud legacy of passing policies that are conducive to upholding civil rights, protecting immigrants from being targeted from deportations, and that promote public safety of all Albuquerqueans. Immigrant friendly/sanctuary counties are counties that promote policies that are conducive to the full integration, safety, participation, and representation of immigrant, refugee, and communities of color and those are values that the majority of Albuquerqueans believe in."

"In addition to being petty and dangerous, Sessions' demands raise serious constitutional concerns," said ACLU of New Mexico staff attorney Kristin Love. "The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the federal government cannot 'commandeer' our local officials by forcing them to enforce federal law—here, as Sessions would have it, federal immigration law. Furthermore, his demand that our detention facilities hold certain people beyond their release date violates 4th Amendment protections against unlawful arrests. These violations would make our cities vulnerable to costly litigation at a moment when we can least afford it."

"Over the last five years, we have participated in efforts to support our immigrant entrepreneurial community through initiatives like City Alive and the Molino Project, because we recognize the important contributions immigrant-owned businesses make to Bernalillo's overall economic landscape," Andrea Plaza, Executive Director of Encuentro explains. "These businesses have created jobs, generated millions of dollars in local tax revenue and revitalized many of our cities business corridors. It is not good public policy to target the very families that are helping us to grow our struggling economy."

Jessica Rodríguez, mother, worker, small business owner, and active member of El CENTRO condemns this attack on immigrant communities, "The impact that Commissioner Johnson's resolution would have had on our communities is not hypothetical. When ICE had a permanent presence at MDC and after Mayor Berry invited ICE to the Transportation Center, our communities experienced firsthand the devastation that deportation can have on the social, economic, and cultural fabric of communities. We must not go back to that dark time in our history." She added, "Immigrants, like all Albuquerqueans, work hard for the welfare of our families and communities, we contribute in countless ways, and we try to build communities where justice and equality prevail for all. We cannot normalize the deportation of our communities. We continue urging our elected officials not to allow Trump to play politics with our public safety and to defend the resolution reaffirming Bernalillo County as an immigrant-friendly county."

Julia Salinas, Interim Co-Executive Director of Enlace Comunitario, a local domestic violence agency, is concerned about the chilling impact Johnson's resolution would have on victims of domestic violence, "Rescinding Bernalillo County's immigrant-friendly policies and procedures, and providing ICE access to our jails and local justice systems, would have resulted in an increase in unreported and unaddressed crimes in our community. To say that the results could be deadly is not hyperbolic. We have often seen perpetrators use the threat of ICE detainment and deportation as a tool to continue abusing survivors of domestic violence, confident that they will not risk interaction with the justice system if it could result in detainment or deportation of themselves or their family members."

Faith leaders have expressed concern about Commissioner Johnson's resolution. Rabbi Paul Citrin reminds the County Commission of the biblical tradition's call to empathy and compassion:

"If we would have reversed our exemplary humane and moral policy, we would have reduced the civility and compassion our county has demonstrated up to now. I respectfully remind you of the Biblical values of Judeo-Christian tradition, one of which is expressed as follows: When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; I am the Eternal your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)".

Abbas Akhil, board member of the NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice and immediate past president of the Islamic Center of New Mexico adds, "This administration has refined the art of coercion to accomplish its agenda. The withholding of public safety funds for local governments unless they cave into Mr. Sessions and the Trump administration's demands is an example of this strategy. We the people of Faith, ask our county commissioners to stand and defend our tradition of inclusion."

Kay Bounkeua, speaks to the impact that Commissioner Johnson's resolution would have on Albuquerque's Asian communities:

"Immigrants, including those coming from throughout Asia, have been instrumental in contributing to New Mexico's rich diversity as well as its workforce and the overall economy. Unfortunately, Asian families locally and nationally are forever seen as the constant foreigners of our community, regardless of whether we have been here for several generations and speak English fluently and without an accent. Rescinding Bernalillo County's immigrant friendly status will put our children and families in danger of increased hate crimes and

racism. Our families deserve representatives who will defend them, not buy into the hateful and xenophobic rhetoric that the current national administration has adopted. We will continue to urge the county to protect and support all New Mexico immigrants who have dedicated themselves to giving back and supporting our state.”

###

\*El 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.

----