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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Elected Officials, Community, and Business Leaders
Denounce ICE Enforcement in Albuquerque**

ALBUQUERQUE - At a press conference on Thursday with elected officials, small business owners, and community and economic development leaders will denounce the uptick of ICE activity in Albuquerque and will outline steps being taken to protect Albuquerque families, businesses, and economy.

In December of last year, as part of the Trump administration's anti-immigrant agenda, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that it would be increasing workforce enforcement by 400% nationwide. After years of decline, the number of arrests made by U.S. [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) climbed to a three-year high in fiscal 2017.](#)¹

In Albuquerque, in the past weeks, ICE has begun targeting locally-owned businesses in Albuquerque, through I-9 audits and other enforcement activity. This, combined with ICE targeting immigrant workers and parents at their homes, at court and probation, and at worksites has caused widespread uncertainty, fear, and confusion.

Marian Mendez-Cera, a community organizer at El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos stated, "today, we are here to denounce the uptick of ICE activity in our city and across the state, targeting businesses and hard working immigrant families. These attacks are bad for New Mexico families, workers, businesses, and our local economies. We are working together with elected officials and small business owners to ensure that the civil rights of local workers and business owners are respected. We condemn the systematic attacks against our immigrant communities that erode trust in our public institutions."

The business community and organizations that support entrepreneurship and economic development are also committed to ensuring that employers are aware of their rights. Luis Angel Mendez Serrano, a father of five, and owner of Nena's food is one of the many immigrant-owned business that have formed a working group with El CENTRO and who have attended various community meetings and workshops

¹<https://www.ice.gov/removal-statistics/2017>

about the I-9 process, “Before becoming a business owner, I worked as a restaurant chef for decades, so I understand that protecting my workers is a good business practice. Small businesses and immigrant workers contribute so much to our city’s economy. It is our responsibility as business owners to ensure that we know how to assert our rights if ICE shows up at our business.”

Participants in the press conference reminded business owners that they do not need to give ICE access to private spaces at the worksite, can limit the information given to ICE during an audit to only that required by law, do not need to grant permission for ICE to interrogate employees, and can ensure that their workers if an audit is taking place and that they know their rights.

"Bernalillo County has a track-record of working to pass policies which are conducive to immigrant integration, economic development, and public safety," stated Bernalillo County Commissioner Debbie O' Malley. "In March of 2017 the County Commission passed a policy reaffirming our status as an immigrant-friendly country. We take that commitment seriously. In Albuquerque this a commitment to our neighbors, co-workers, small-business owners down the block, taxpayers, classmates of our children and grandchildren, and our family members. To that end, we will continue to meet with leaders from immigrant communities to develop strategies to protect our families, communities, and local economy."

Immigrants play a vital role in New Mexico’s workforce, and comprised 12.34 percent of the state’s workforce in 2016². From 2006 to 2010, there were 11,440 new immigrant business owners in New Mexico, and they had total net business income of \$389 million, which makes up 8.9% of all net business income in the state.³

“Immigrant workers and businesses are a cornerstone of Albuquerque’s economy,” stated Marco Nunez, Worker Justice Coordinator from El CENTRO. “Beyond the economic indicators such as job creation and tax revenue from our immigrant communities in Albuquerque, their integration in all facets of Albuquerque’s society must be recognized and strengthened, not threatened by malicious policies by the Trump Administration. I-9 audits and enforcement activity will burden small business with having to replace their workforce, will impact Albuquerque's tax-base, and will plunge immigrant families into poverty. This isn’t good business."

"No child should ever have to wake up every morning and be fearful that their parents will not be home when they come home from school," stated Albuquerque Public School Board Member Barbara Petersen. "Not only will current ICE activity plunge working families into poverty, but it creates fear and anxiety for our children. APS children can't learn if they are anxious, afraid, or if we rob their parents of their ability to provide for their children's basic needs. As an APS community, we will continue to strive to implement APS's Safe Haven policies to ensure that all children, regardless of their parents' country of origin or immigration status, feel safe at our schools. In addition, we will continue to work with

²American Immigration Council, *Immigrants in New Mexico*, October 2017.

³ Robert W. Fairlie, *Open for Business: How Immigrants are Driving Small Business Creation in the United States* (New York, NY: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2012), p. 32.

organizations such as El CENTRO to ensure that parents and students are aware of their rights and resources in the community."

Albuquerque City Councilor Pat Davis, a co-sponsor of Resolution 18-7, strengthening Albuquerque's status as an immigrant-friendly city, stressed the commitment of local elected officials to protect immigrant families, workers, and businesses in Albuquerque, "By strengthening Albuquerque's immigrant friendly status through the resolution that Councilor Peña and I are co-sponsoring we are ensuring that the City isn't complicit in the enforcement of Trump's federal deportation programs. That said, we recognize that given the onslaught of attacks by this administration, a policy isn't enough. Being a welcoming City is an ongoing commitment to working together with those communities who are being targeted by this administration to ensure that they have a place at the table as we move forward together to protect our families and communities."

El CENTRO is exploring private/public partnerships with APS, the City of Albuquerque, the Bernalillo County Commission, and business and economic developments associations to ensure that businesses, workers, and immigrant families know-their rights. El CENTRO and the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center will continue to host I-9 Audit and ICE Enforcement workshops for those businesses that want to learn more about their right rights and how to protect their businesses and workforces. The next workshop will be on April 3rd at the South Valley Academy from 7-9 PM (3426 Blake Rd SW, Albuquerque, NM 87105). For a toolkit regarding I-9 audits and employers and workers' rights or to request a workshop, go to www.elentronm.org or contact El CENTRO at (505) 246-1627.

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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.