



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ashley Villaverde Halvorson, President
losabogados@loasabogados.org

June 21, 2018

Los Abogados Statement Against Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy and Child Detention

Like many Americans and others who are watching from around the world, Los Abogados was horrified by the Trump Administration's policy of separating children from their parents at the border. There was no acceptable defense of this policy, there was no legal requirement for it, and there is no one else to blame for it other than the Trump Administration. The executive order withdrawing the family separation policy is not a solution to this crisis President Trump created.

President Trump made his reasoning for this policy clear by previously referring to immigrants as "animals," and comparing immigrants to vermin "infesting" this country. This blatant and shameless scapegoating of immigrants, and use of these 'fringe' phrases and political tactics, sets us back decades to the darkest days in this country's history.

While President Trump has reversed course by executive order after the onslaught of media coverage and public outcry, we will not be fooled, we will not forget, and we will be ready for his next assault on our immigrant and minority communities. While the Administration purports in the order to end the separation of families, it reiterates the 'zero tolerance' policy, and sets forth an ominous framework for the mass incarceration of immigrant families awaiting legal proceedings. The order further reveals the Administration's intent to attack the current legal protection afforded children by the *Flores Agreement*, such as requiring that facilities be licensed to accommodate children, and limiting the detention of children to 20 days. This is not a solution.

The people of this country and in our community will not sit by while this Administration continues to dismantle centuries of progress toward equality, justice, and human rights and dignity. "Despite the damage it has caused, the reversal of this shameful policy amongst public pressure should stand as a beacon of hope that we are still a democracy, and our voices still matter. We must continue to make our voices heard, and to speak out for those who are most vulnerable amongst us," said Los Abogados President, Ashley Villaverde Halvorson.

Los Abogados is still gravely concerned for the thousands of families who have been separated, who are not guaranteed legal representation by our Constitution, who are still in custody, and who are reportedly being subjected to mass legal proceedings. We are also gravely concerned for the asylum seekers at our border, and have written to the Port of Nogales to demand that asylum seekers are accepted into this country according

to the law. Los Abogados has also written to the Acting U.S. Attorney for Arizona to request that they decline for prosecution those who have been wrongfully separated from their children, in order to ensure a more speedy reunification of families, and to hopefully reduce the permanent trauma being inflicted upon these children.

Los Abogados calls upon the Trump Administration to immediately reunite these families, terminate the 'zero tolerance' policy, and to put forth energy and resources toward actually governing this country and restoring our reputation as a symbol of freedom and opportunity. Los Abogados further calls upon its members to contact their congressional leaders and urge them to promptly enact humane immigration reform.

Finally, Los Abogados urges its members and friends in the legal community to engage with local leaders, to participate in peaceful resistance to the inhumane treatment of immigrants and Latinos, and to provide pro bono services to those in need at the local level. In 2017, Los Abogados awarded the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project with its Community Service Award for its exemplary service in providing free legal and social services to detained immigrants and unaccompanied children. This current crisis further demonstrates how critical their work is to the families and children seeking a better life in our country. There are thousands of children that still need representation despite President Trump's "change of heart," reversing the family separation policy. For those who are able to contribute pro bono hours or make tax deductible donations, please visit their website at <https://firrp.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/FlorenceProject/> for more information.

###

Los Abogados is Arizona's Hispanic Bar Association. Founded in 1976 and incorporated in 1988, members of Los Abogados include private and public attorneys, judges, businesspeople, paralegals, and law students. Members practice throughout Arizona and presently serve as officers and directors of county, state, and federal bar associations. The mission of Los Abogados is to enhance the legal profession by promoting diversity, improving the quality and administration of legal services, encouraging education in the Latino community, supporting the just application of Civil Rights, and advocating for the Latino community.

www.losabogados.org

2009 & 2010 Hispanic National Bar Association

Affiliate Organization of the Year

