



August 30, 2019

Governor Ron DeSantis  
c/o James H. Percival  
Office of the Attorney General  
State of Florida  
107 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
*via email James.Percival@myfloridalegal.com*

Governor DeSantis,

In light of your August 28 Emergency Declaration<sup>1</sup> and the serious threat posed by Hurricane Dorian, we write to ask that you enact and widely publicize policies to protect public safety as Florida prepares for Hurricane Dorian. Specifically, we request that you amend your declaration and immediately issue a public statement suspending immigration enforcement by state and local authorities pursuant to Chapter 908 of Florida Statutes in all areas under a state of emergency, and in areas where residents are evacuating, sheltering, passing through and later evacuees will be returning to their homes. ICE has already announced suspension of immigration enforcement activities as of August 29.<sup>2</sup> Consistent State and local action on this is needed to ensure an orderly and effective preparation for and response to the storm, and to allow law enforcement to focus on protecting the safety of the public.

Access to shelter during a natural disaster is a fundamental human right, and preparation and evacuation should never lead to detention or deportation. Fear in immigrant communities is at an all-time high and, without intervention, will prevent families from accessing vital services, including taking shelter in public facilities, when needed, and protecting and assisting others. Florida's recently passed SB 168 exacerbates this sentiment. In this environment, immigrant residents and their families may not take lifesaving steps to evacuate, go to shelters, and access emergency aid efforts unless Florida makes specific public reassurances that immigration enforcement is suspended. Such assurances are critical to the ongoing safety of all residents during this humanitarian crisis and necessary so that resources can be focused on life-saving activities, preventing the loss of property to the extent possible, and assisting with a speedy recovery of the affected region.

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 19-189, Emergency Management - Hurricane Dorian <https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/EO-19-189.pdf>; Governor Ron DeSantis Declares State of Emergency, Urges Floridians to Prepare for Hurricane Dorian, August 28, 2019 <https://www.flgov.com/2019/08/28/governor-ron-desantis-declares-state-of-emergency-urges-floridians-to-prepare-for-hurricane-dorian/>

<sup>2</sup> "ICE Calls Off Raids During Dorian, Immigrant Advocates Not Taking Any Chances," Miami New Times, August 30, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/immigrant-advocates-prepare-as-hurricane-dorian-approaches-florida-11255671>

ICE has suspended immigration enforcement as it has done during storms over the past several years, including during Hurricanes Irma<sup>3</sup> and Michael.<sup>4</sup> However, in the past, SB 168 was not law. All directives in these moments should be clear and unequivocal<sup>5</sup> that all state and local cooperation with ICE enforcement in a humanitarian disaster relief area is suspended during the state of emergency and while preparation and relief efforts of evacuations, sheltering, and return of evacuees to their homes is on-going.

Sincerely,

Alana Greer - Community Justice Project, Inc.  
Isabel Vinent - Florida Immigrant Coalition  
Rebecca Sharpless - Immigration Clinic, University of Miami School of Law  
Monsignor Chanel Jeanty & Pastor Aaron Lauer - PACT  
Bud Conlin - Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees  
Jonathan Fried - WeCount!  
Marleine Bastien - FANM (Family Action Network Movement)  
Antonio Tovar PhD - Farmworker Association of Florida  
Michelle M. Ortiz - Americans for Immigrant Justice, Inc.  
Kristen Singer - Catalyst Miami  
Jonel Edwards - Dream Defenders  
Paul R. Chavez - Southern Poverty Law Center  
Andrea Mercado - New Florida Majority  
Jill Hanson - Palm Beach Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Sr. Ann Kendrick - Hope CommUnity Center  
Nery Lopez - Florida Immigrant Youth Network  
Lorena Jofre - Students Working for Equal Rights  
Laurie Scop - Bend the Arc  
Emma Collum - Women's March Florida  
Maria Bilbao - United We Dream  
Martha Vallejo, LCSW, MSW & Vicki Rosenthal, MSW - National Association of Social Workers Florida, Immigration Justice Task Force  
Adrian Madriz – SMASH  
Marcia Olivo, Claudia Navarro & Marie Francois – Miami Workers Center  
Dian Alarcon - National Institute for Reproductive  
Maria Torres – Diaspora en Resistencia  
Nancy Metayer – New Florida Majority  
Maria Bilbao – Circle of Protection  
Miami Climate Alliance  
Laurie Scop - Bend the Arc South Florida

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<sup>3</sup> DHS Statement Regarding Safety and Enforcement During Hurricane Irma, September 6, 2017 <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/09/06/dhs-statement-regarding-safety-and-enforcement-during-hurricane-irma>

<sup>4</sup> DHS Statement Regarding Safety and Enforcement During Hurricane Michael <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/dhs-statement-regarding-safety-and-enforcement-during-hurricane-michael-translations>

<sup>5</sup> *As Hurricane Irma Neared Florida, Immigration Agents Kept Picking Up Undocumented People Despite Promises*, BuzzFeed News, December 4, 2017 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/salvadorhernandez/as-hurricane-irma-neared-florida-immigration-agents-kept> (Failure to provide clarity and effective date undermined efforts “When asked why enforcement operations continued even after DHS declared that such actions would cease, Peter Daniel, assisting chief patrol agent of the US Border Patrol’s Miami sector, noted that the Sept. 6 statement did not specify when the directive should take effect. ‘Well, is there a starting date in the document?’ Daniel asked BuzzFeed News. ‘There you go.’”)