



FLORIDA IMMIGRANT COALITION
For the fair treatment of ALL people

August 30, 2019

Mayor Carlos Gimenez
c/o Michael B. Valdes
Assistant County Attorney
Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office
via email Michael.Valdes@miamidade.gov

Mayor Gimenez,

In light of the serious threat posed by Hurricane Dorian, we write to ask that you enact and widely publicize policies to protect immigrant communities as Florida prepares for Hurricane Dorian. ICE has already announced suspension of immigration enforcement activities as of August 29.¹

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 or 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 Miami-Dade County makes specific public assurances 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.

After Irma, lack of state ID or a driver's license also presented serious obstacles to immigrant residents attempting to return to their home and underscored the need to provide and honor alternate forms of identification, as local groups have advocated for.²

¹ "ICE Calls Off Raids During Dorian, Immigrant Advocates Not Taking Any Chances," Miami New Times, August 30, 2019, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/immigrant-advocates-prepare-as-hurricane-dorian-approaches-florida-11255671>

² "Identification cards for undocumented immigrants? A Miami-Dade group is working on it," Miami Herald, August 28, 2019 <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article234475452.html>; *see also* PACT <http://www.miamipact.org/immigration.html>

ICE has suspended immigration enforcement as it has done during storms over the past several years, including during Hurricanes Irma³ and Michael.⁴ However, in the past, SB 168 was not law. All directives in these moments should be clear and unequivocal⁵ that all state and local cooperation with ICE enforcement in a humanitarian disaster relief area is suspended during the state of emergency and while relief efforts of preparation, 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
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
Nancy Metayer – New Florida Majority
Maria Bilbao – Circle of Protection
Miami Climate Alliance

³ 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>

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

⁵ *As Hurricane Irma Nears Florida, Immigration Agents Kept Picking Up Undocumented People Despite Promises*, BuzzFeed News, December 4, 2017 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/salvadorhernandez/as-hurricane-irma-nears-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.’)