

## NEW IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT WILL PROVIDE STATEWIDE LEGAL SERVICES TO HELP KEEP OREGON FAMILIES TOGETHER

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PORTLAND, Oregon – A new statewide project will provide tailored immigration legal advice to Oregonians facing criminal charges who would not otherwise be able to afford it. The Immigrant Rights Project will be launched by the Portland-based nonprofit the Oregon Justice Resource Center on January 1, 2018. The new program comes at a time when major changes to enforcement and deportation policies by the Trump administration present an increased threat to the rights of immigrant families and communities.

“The changes in rhetoric, policies, and practices that we’ve seen this year are a source of alarm for many immigrant Oregonians and their families,” said Bobbin Singh, Executive Director of the Oregon Justice Resource Center. “Our new Immigrant Rights Project will see us address the challenges faced by Oregon’s public defenders in obtaining specialized immigration legal advice for their immigrant clients.”

The US Supreme Court has recognized that protecting the constitutional rights of immigrants who are charged with crimes means they must be offered immigration legal advice about the potential immigration consequences of pleas or convictions. The constitution mandates a criminal defense attorney for someone facing criminal charges who can’t afford a lawyer and the Office of Public Defense Services funds specialist advice from an immigration attorney for immigrant defendants as part of this mandate.

“Our attorneys will work with defense counsel to assess risks and determine best ways forward based on the client’s criminal, immigration, family and personal history,” said Singh. “Beyond this, we will also post practice advisories and other resources for

Oregon's defense and immigration attorneys to use in representing their clients and will create and maintain resources that reflect the dynamic changes in this complex area of law.”

This project is funded by a two-year, \$400,000 contract from the Office of Public Defense Services. It will be staffed by two immigration attorneys and will be available to any public defender across Oregon who needs assistance for their immigrant client.

**Please contact Alice Lundell for more information or interviews.**

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Please note that OJRC will not represent individuals in their criminal or immigration cases. Oregonians will be able to access our help through their public defender.

Oregon Justice Resource Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing legal services to currently and formerly incarcerated Oregonians and working for systemic reform of the criminal justice system.