



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 2, 2017

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL, CONGRESSMAN GUTIERREZ JOIN COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO CELEBRATE ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHICAGO LEGAL PROTECTION FUND

Surpassing its first year goals, the City pledges an additional \$1.3 million to support continued legal services for immigrants and refugees in 2018

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Congressman Luis Gutierrez today joined more than 100 elected officials, community leaders and volunteers to celebrate the one year anniversary of the Chicago Legal Protection Fund. The Fund was established to assist thousands of immigrants and refugees in the City who were threatened with deportation in the post-election era.

"Our volunteers have done incredible work over the past year to ensure the lives of all our residents are protected and supported," said Mayor Emanuel. "When we stand up for our immigrants and refugees, we are standing up for the American Dream, and I want to thank all of the community partners and volunteers who have been fighting to turn that dream into a reality."

To date, the Fund has trained more than 400 community volunteers, conducting nearly 700 Know Your Rights trainings and touched over 22,000 immigrants through community based outreach, education, legal consultations and courtroom representation – surpassing all first year goals.

"Chicago has a lot to be proud of, not the least of which is the city's commitment to treating immigrants with fairness and respect," said Congressman Gutierrez. "Chicago is setting the standard for communities across the country. From the Mayor's office on down, the City is rising to the challenge of the anti-immigrant attitudes and policies coming from the White House and Washington. We know families strengthen neighborhoods and neighborhoods strengthen the city, so defending immigrant families is the right thing to do for the wellbeing of our entire community."

The City plans to continue supporting the Legal Protection Fund with an additional \$1.3 investment planned for 2018.

“With the Legal Protection Fund, Chicago has become a leader in protecting its immigrant community,” said Erendira Rendon of the Resurrection Project and DACA recipient. “The community navigators that community based organizations train and organize have reached over 22,000 Chicagoans providing immigrants with Know Your Rights education and connecting them to free legal counsel; this partnership tells immigrants that Chicago is with them.”

The Fund is administered through the Heartland Alliance’s National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) and the Resurrection Project in partnership with eight community organizations that include:

- Centro Romero
- Centro de Trabajadores Unidos
- Erie Neighborhood House
- Instituto del Progreso Latino (IDPL)
- Indo-American Center (IAC)
- Hana Center
- Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)
- United African Organization (UAO)

A recent study by researchers at Syracuse University found that the efforts by the Legal Protection Fund have contributed to a dramatic increase in legal representation for immigrant and refugees in Chicago. According to the report, the percentage of immigrants in Chicago who were represented in deportation hearings spiked from 30 percent in May to 57 percent in August.

"In a year where our communities have faced increasing threats to their/our rights from the federal government, we've been grateful to be able to work together with the Community Navigators to defend immigrant Chicagoans, help our neighbors understand their rights, and ensure immigrant residents know they are not alone. Access to counsel is critical to keeping families and neighborhoods intact, and we'll continue to work hard next year and as long as it takes until that right is secured," said Mary Meg McCarthy, executive director, NIJC.

The Legal Defense Fund is one in a series of actions the Emanuel Administration has taken to remind all residents that they are welcome in the City of Chicago.

Last year, the Mayor joined Congressman Gutierrez and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin to launch the “Chicago is With You,” task force. The Task Force focuses on developing coordinated policies on mental health, legal services, employer communications, and education to ensure the City is delivering comprehensive services to immigrant, refugees and other disenfranchised communities.

Since taking office, Mayor Emanuel has also launched a series of initiatives that improve the immigrant community's access to service, expand new and existing immigrant businesses, and welcomes and celebrates Chicago's diverse immigrant communities. These initiatives include launching the Cities for Citizenship Campaign with the Mayors of New York City and Los Angeles, which has grown into a bipartisan effort which works with nearly 40 City and county leaders across America.

###