



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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Deni L. Taveras

Council Member, District 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 28, 2017

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COUNCIL MEMBER DENI TAVERAS ANNOUNCES ISLA LEGAL DEFENSE FUND SERVICES DURING HISPANIC HERITAGE CONFERENCE

Immigrant Services and Language Access (ISLA) Initiative to Enhance Language Access and Legal Defense Services in Prince George's County

Prince George's County Council Member Deni Taveras (D) – District 2 will announce the Legal Service Provider (LSP) selected for Prince George's County's Immigration Services and Language Access (ISLA) Initiative on Saturday, September 30, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. during the Hispanic Heritage Conference and Celebration at the University of Maryland—a conference co-sponsored by the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, the Department of Sociology, the Department of Anthropology, and the Center for Global Migration Studies at the University of Maryland.

The ISLA Initiative was established by Council Member Taveras following the adoption of Council Resolution 2-2017, legislation denouncing anti-immigrant activity, racial bias and discrimination, hate speech, hate crimes and harassment in Prince George's County. ISLA is an innovative public-private partnership between the County Council, government agencies, the Prince George's County Human Relations Commission, legal community, and various nonprofit organizations working to ensure immigrant residents do not face immigration court or the threat of deportation alone and without legal aid.

Council Member Taveras noted the precarious position of many immigrants upon arrival to the United States and their need for legal protections.

"Many immigrants who have come to this county are refugees seeking family reunification, some are fleeing countries facing political and economic crisis, civil unrest, or the threat of violence," said Council Member Taveras. "The constitutional guarantee of due process cannot be safeguarded when an immigrant faces the threat of deportation without the help of an attorney. The ISLA initiative will help protect their rights by providing legal defense services and support."

The County Council approved \$50,000 in FY 2018 to support translation equipment and services through the Office of Community Relations. An additional \$100,000 was approved to support ISLA as a public-private partnership. Through the Human Relations Commission and with support from various non-profit providers and the City of Hyattsville, Prince George's County successfully applied for a \$100,000 matching grant to fund ISLA as an innovative public-private partnership.

In Prince George's County, 21% of residents are foreign-born and 22% speak a language other than English in the home. Over 75,000 residents are estimated to be unauthorized immigrants, with many living in the county for more than 5 years. Over 70% of the County's immigrant population is employed and 31% are homeowners.

Council Member Taveras says the benefits of helping those that are most at risk of discrimination are universal.

“All Prince Georgians benefit when landlords, businesses, and the government treat all of our residents equally,” said Council Member Taveras. “Every resident deserves the opportunity to thrive and make a positive contribution to improving our schools, neighborhoods, and commercial areas. The social and economic costs of destabilizing the family and community context of already marginalized county residents warrant the much-needed social investment proposed by this initiative.”

Under the new initiative, Prince George’s County will provide funding for trained legal service providers to represent immigrants facing deportation proceedings. These funds will be supplemented by a catalyst grant administered by the Vera Institute of Justice. The Vera Institute is also providing Prince George’s County technical assistance and support, including assistance in identifying and training legal service providers, providing opportunities to share best practices with other jurisdictions, and providing data collection and research support, with an eye toward evaluation.

“The constitutional guarantee of due process applies to people residing in the U.S., including immigrants. Before we separate parents and children, before we remove someone who is a hard-working and valued member of our community, we must respect their rights,” said Oren Root, Director of the Center on Immigration and Justice at the Vera Institute of Justice.

As a public-private partnership with the Vera Institute of Justice, the Legal Service Provider (LSP) competitively selected for Prince George’s County’s Immigration Services and Language Access (ISLA) Initiative is the Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights (CAIR) Coalition. Services are anticipated to start by the end of October, 2017.

What:

ISLA Announcement*

Who:

Prince George’s County Council Member Deni Taveras

When:

Saturday, September 30, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

Where:

University of Maryland
Juan Ramon Jimenez (2208) Conference Room
Adele Stamp Student Union
College Park, Maryland

**media availability*

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All legislative powers of Prince George’s County are vested in the County Council. The County Council sits as the District Council on zoning and land use policy, and as the Board of Health to govern and guide health policy. The County Council meets as a legislative body on Tuesdays in the Council Hearing Room on the first floor of the County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro. For more information on the Prince George’s County Council, please visit www.princegeorgescountymd.gov.

About the Vera Institute of Justice:

Vera Institute of Justice is an independent nonprofit national research and policy organization working with governments to build and improve justice systems that ensure fairness, promote safety, and strengthen communities.

About the Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights Coalition:

The Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights Coalition strives to ensure equal justice for all immigrant men, women, and children at risk of detention and deportation in the DC metropolitan area and beyond through direct legal representation, know your rights presentations, impact and advocacy work, and the training of attorneys defending immigrants in the immigration and criminal justice arenas.