



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE AND NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK STAND WITH IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS AND COMBAT HATE CRIMES

JEFFREY D. KLEIN November 28, 2016

| ISSUE: **INDIGENT LEGAL SERVICES, FAMILIES, FUNDING, IMMIGRATION**

*Independent Democratic Conference Announce \$250,000 in funding for the Vera Institute of Justice's New York Immigrant Family Unity Project*

**New York — Senators Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Tony Avella (D-Queens), Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn), Senator-elect Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan) and the National Action Network**, joined by the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, the New York Immigration Coalition and the Vera Institute of Justice, on Monday stood in solidarity with immigrant communities to protect civil rights and combat hate crimes. The IDC also announced \$250,000 in funding for the Vera Institute of Justice's New York Immigrant Family Unity Project to provide public defenders to those facing deportation and called for \$4 million funding to meet the remaining statewide need.

"We must stand together in the face of hate and protect our immigrant communities. For many, the threat of deportation is an especially difficult challenge to overcome, and often financial barriers prevent them from having fair representation. We want to knock that financial wall down. This is why it is so important, especially now, to ensure funding for programs like the Vera Institute of Justice's New York Immigrant Family Unity Project so

that immigrants facing deportation have a fair day in court. I will continue to fight for this funding in the 2017 legislative session and beyond,” **said Senator Klein.**

“In the community I represent in Washington Heights I am confronted nearly everyday with questions from constituents about their future in this county. Now more than ever we must work together to ensure that immigrant communities are protected. This funding for the Vera Institute secured by the IDC is an important step and I look forward to continuing to work to allocate funding to this program next year,” **said Senator-Elect Alcantara.**

“Intolerance and hate will never be accepted in this state and we will always stand up against it. Immigrants are the fabric of our great nation and of this state and we will protect those who face the fear of being separated from their families through deportation. It is important for every person to have legal representation and I’m proud the IDC secured funding for the Vera Institute’s great work. We will continue to advocate for funding so that every immigrant can have a public attorney at their side,” **said Senator Hamilton.**

“We will never tolerate hate in this state and we must always remember that this nation is one made up of immigrants. I’m proud that as a member of the IDC, I worked to secure funds to ensure that immigrants in this state facing deportation have legal representation. The fear of losing your family is unbearable and the fear of losing a deportation case while unrepresented is simply frightening. We will work to make sure that we continue to fund public defenders for our immigrants,” **said Senator Savino.**

“Hate and intolerance towards any community in New York is unacceptable and must be stood up to by all. The Vera Institute of Justice does the important job of providing those immigrants facing deportation with legal representation who may otherwise be left to fend for themselves. As a conference, the IDC has continuously fought for immigrants rights and we will continue to do so with programs like these,” **said Senator Avella.**

“In the aftermath of the Presidential election millions of New Yorkers are fearful of the draconian immigration rhetoric espoused by Mr. Trump during the campaign. The threat of mass deportations and covert roundup squads are eerily reflective of authoritarian and fascist regimes throughout history and the world today,” **said Minister Kirsten John Foy, Northeast Regional Director, National Action Network.** “We in the civil and human rights community along with those in the immigrant rights community and other progressive voices stand with Senator Jeff Klein and the IDC as they demonstrate leadership in protecting all New Yorkers from the scourge of xenophobia. Once again Senator Klein and the IDC have put their votes where their mouths are and will fight for much needed increases in funding for legal services to protect our immigrant relatives, neighbors, friends and fellow New Yorkers and we proudly applaud and support these efforts!”

The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) was launched in 2013 as a pilot program to provide representation for indigent detained people in proceedings at Varick Street Immigration Court. The program increases the chances that immigrants will win their cases by 1,000 percent. Their efforts are devoted to detained immigration courts because of the low representation rates that exist at these locations. The program is currently meeting 100% of the need in New York City; however, there is a need for more funding in courts outside the city. New York State has six immigration courts.

Members of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project Coalition include: the Vera Institute of Justice Immigration Justice Clinic; Immigration Justice Clinic, Cardozo Law School; Make the Road New York; Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights; Brooklyn Defender Services; Legal Aid Society; The Bronx Defenders; and Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Erie County Bar Association.

The \$250,000 in funding secured by Senator Klein and the IDC will be used at the Batavia and Napanoch, New York detained immigration courts located in Upstate New York. Vera

Institute of Justice's NYIFUP is currently serving 13% of the need at Batavia and 48% of the need at Napanoch.

During next year's legislative session the IDC will work with the state and city to secure \$11.1 million in total funding for the NYIFUP program that will allow for 100% representation for those in immigration court in New York. The Vera Institute of Justice has estimated that this would save the state \$5.9 million in annual savings, by cutting costs for public health insurance programs and foster care services.

"The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project protects New Yorkers who have a legal right to stay in the United States from being unjustly torn from their families and our communities. The Vera Institute of Justice, a member of the NYIFUP Coalition, applauds Senator Klein for his foresight and leadership on this issue of such critical importance to all New Yorkers," **said Oren Root, director of the Center on Immigration and Justice at the Vera Institute of Justice.**

**Steven Choi, executive director, New York Immigration Coalition said,** "The New York Family Unity Immigration Project has provided critical services to detained immigrants facing deportation. Now more than ever, funding to support and protect New York's immigrant communities is crucial as we face the possibilities of increased enforcement and unjust practices against immigrants. Kudos to the Independent Democratic Conference and the National Action Network for this essential funding that will ensure that immigrants are provided with the best possible representation. Every immigrant deserves legal support and this funding takes us one step further to this goal."

"Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrants Rights receives hundreds of calls a day from immigrants seeking much needed, trustworthy legal assistance. NMCIR is at the frontline of preventing deportations, and has been for the last 20 years. As a member of the New York

Immigrant Family Unity Project, we applaud Senator Klein and Senator Alcantara for their vision and forethought in funding and expanding this much needed universal representation program for detained immigrants,” **said Angela Fernandez, Esq., Executive Director of Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights.** “This program allows for immigrants who have a legal right to stay, actually exercise that right with court-appointed counsel, closing this unforgivable justice gap.”

“Despite the rhetoric and proposed immigration policies coming from the President-elect and others, concerned New Yorkers need to know that The Legal Aid Society stands strong and ready in your defense – a sacred duty we’ve had with this city and the public since our inception in 1876,” **said Seymour W. James, Jr., Attorney-in-Chief of The Legal Aid Society.**

“Through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, we’ve upheld that duty and successfully defended many local families unfairly entangled in deportation proceedings. Defender services across New York State need strong investment from our partners in government to guarantee counsel for every family struggling with this arcane process.”